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4 killed in Anambra/Kogi border communities' clash

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BY GEOFFREY ANYANWU, AWKA ON JULY 23, 2014

COVER

Tension heightened again in the troubled **Aguleri and Echeno/Odeke boundary communities of Anambra and Kogi states on Monday following the alleged killing of four persons from Aguleri in Anambra East Local Government Area.**

During the latest attack, seven persons were also injured with some still in a private hospital in Onitsha at press time.

The people of Aguleri and the neighbouring Echeno/Odeke in Ibaji Local Government Area of Kogi State had been laying claim to the oil deposits on the Omambala River Basin, which had resulted in several clashes with casualties.

Though the two communities had been involved in skirmishes for decades, the clashes became more pronounced with the commissioning of Orient Petroleum Refinery in Aguleri Otu in Anambra State by President Goodluck Jonathan in 2012.

Checks by Daily Sun revealed that Monday's attack at about 3 p.m. took the Aguleri people unawares, hence the casualty figures on their side.

While casualty figures on the Kogi side could not be ascertained at press time, eyewitness account confirmed that the attack involved the use of sophisticated weapons and in the presence of security operatives guarding the buffer zone created in the area by the National Boundary Commission (NBC) to forestall clashes between the warring communities.

The sources alleged that one of those guarding the buffer zone had informed Kogi people of the presence of Aguleri natives at the disputed area, and the former stormed the area in large numbers, armed with dangerous weapons, including automatic rifles usually handled by security operatives. Meanwhile, the people of Aguleri have expressed surprise over the attack as it came on the heels of a peace committee meeting held between the two communities last week at Idah in Kogi State, stressing that it showed that some people in Odeke were not prepared to see peace return to the area.

Confirming the incident yesterday, the Anambra State Police Public Relations Officer, Mr. Emeka Chukwuemeka (DSP), who declined to talk on the casualty figures, said the matter was being investigated at the highest level of security, adding that it would be premature for him to speak on the clash.

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Following the frequent clashes in the area, the NBC had severally met with the deputy governors of the two states for the purpose of finding a lasting solution to the boundary dispute.

Also at the last meeting chaired by the Director general of the NBC, Dr. M. B. Ahmad, where the deputy governors of the two states and a representative of the Surveyor General of the Federation were in attendance, it was noted that the Anambra/Kogi interstate boundary was the boundary of the former Northern and Eastern regions described in the Legal Notice No 126 of 1954.

The boundary dispute had sometime ago led to an Anambra State member of the House of Representatives, Mrs. Uche Ekwunife, having a shouting match with her counterpart from Kogi State, Mr. Ismail Husain, at the National Assembly over the controversial oil deposits in the area.

Daily Sun gathered yesterday that tension was mounting in Aguleri quarters as the people, especially the youths, were itching for a revenge but were being urged to remain calm.

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