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9 feared killed as PDP, ACN clash in Akwa Ibom State

March 23, 2011

On **22 March**, supporters of [the Peoples Democratic Party](#) (PDP) and the [Action Congress](#)

[of Nigeria](#) (ACN), clashed violently at the [Itu junction on the Calabar/Ikot Ekpene road](#) and also in Uyo, capital of [Akwa Ibom State](#), with about nine people **killed**, and several vehicles and buildings burnt.



Senator
JOHN
UDOEDEHE,
ACN
candidate

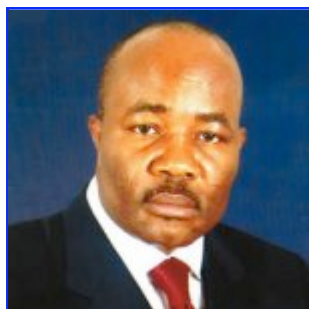
According to local sources, trouble started when the [ACN governorship candidate, Senator John Akpan Udoedehe](#), took his **campaign** to Ikot Ekpene, the [home zone of the incumbent governor and PDP flag bearer, Godswill Akpabio](#). Udoedehe and his supporters were heading to their [rally at a primary school in Ikot Opongadong](#). Sources say the ACN's requests for three other venues had been turned down before it finally got the primary school, and that the party had in fact been told to stay away from Ikot Ekpene.

As the ACN **campaign** train approached the Itu junction on the Calabar/Ikot Ekpene road, it was barred from entering the area by some thugs who had barricaded the road, allegedly on the orders of the PDP government. The face-off between the two groups led to a clash in which various weapons – guns, machetes, stones and others – were freely used. By the time the dust settled, about nine ACN members lay dead or critically wounded.

The ACN governorship candidate, Senator Udoedehe, reports that: “At that Itu Junction, what confronted us were stone-throwing and gun-shooting supporters of the PDP. Our convoy was chased back while one of the buses which was conveying our supporters was seized by the PDP thugs and taken to an unknown destination”.

A story soon spread through the state capital, Uyo, that PDP thugs had **killed** the ACN candidate. Tension between the supporters of the two parties boiled over and clashes erupted in the city. About 20 vehicles were either damaged or burnt, including some at the state government’s secretariat. A private school belonging to Senator Aloysuis Etok, representing Ikot Ekpene Senatorial District, was also set on fire. Also affected by the mayhem, was a local office of the President Goodluck Jonathan **Campaign** Organisation, opposite Total filling station on Abak Road. The fighters also looted many shops.

Anti-riot police shot tear gas repeatedly into the air in an effort to scare away the fighters, but the fights persisted. With the police on ground seemingly overstretched by the spreading **violence**, the state government had to call in soldiers from the Ibagwa Army Barracks to stop further attacks on government property and human lives, and restore order.



GODSWILL
AKPABIO,
Governor,
Akwa Ibom
State

In its reaction to the **violence**, the state government claimed ignorance of those who provoked the clashes. Speaking through his Commissioner for Information, Aniekan Umanah, Governor Akpabio said he had no hand in the fracas, as he was busy with his campaigns elsewhere in the state when the Ikot Ekpene incident happened. He said: “We don’t know those involved”.

However, in the same breath, the government blamed the **violence** on the ACN. According to the Information Commissioner, Umanah, it was the ACN flag-bearer and his supporters that launched an unprovoked attack on “the people and government of **Akwa Ibom** State”. Umanah alleged that it was the ACN supporters, “hiding cutlasses in their brooms” (the ACN symbol), that attacked people with petrol bombs, assisted by miscreants and hoodlums.

In a more revealing reaction, another PDP source wondered why the ACN tried to force its way into Ikot Ekpene, after it had been warned to take its campaigns elsewhere. “They had been warned that no other party, except PDP, should come for **campaign** in Annang land. So, why did they come?” He said the conflict in Uyo was the handiwork of ACN supporters, who descended on government and private properties in the state capital, after they had been chased out by “the good people of Ikot Ekpene”.

Annang people should bear in mind that Akpabio would leave office one day. They have no right to stop other parties from campaigning in their localities. I strongly believe that this would be the last time an Annang man will rule the state because Uyo people will not give them that chance again. May the souls of the departed rest in peace.