

A' Ibom/Cross River Boundary Crisis: Six Killed, Houses Razed

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At least six persons were declared dead and several others injured after the age-long communal war between Oku Iboku community in Akwa Ibom State and Ikot Offiong in Cross River State, degenerated into a full scale war.

According to eye witnesses' accounts, several houses, a Julius Berger truck and other vehicles, were burnt down around the Calabar-Itu Head Bridge and adjoining communities, forcing commuters using the highway to beat a retreat. It was gathered that two security operatives were among those killed.

The military was forced to deploy dozens of soldiers at the scene. Police have also deployed detachments of Police Mobile Force (PMF), unit 26 and 57, to quell the mayhem.

Passengers to and from Calabar, capital of Cross River State, were stranded for hours as the major access road was blocked by soldiers, Anti-Riot Policemen and other security agencies.

A community leader in Oku Iboku, Chief Ene Essien, said that this latest bloodbath started after series of attempts by the people of Ikot-Offiong, to reoccupy the fishing area after they were forced out by the people of Oku Iboku, failed.

Essien said: "The Ikot-Offiong people are fishermen, who migrated into our area from Akpabuyo, in Cross River State to settle down.

After settling for so many years, they developed the urge of seizing our land and even expanding more into Itu. Their uncomplimentary relationship with the host community forced us to push them away from the fishing community.

When they left our community, they settled at Odukpani, but the people also pushed them out to their place in Akpabuyo, because of their penchant for war.” Essien recalled that the intractable war has lingered for years, leading to recurrent attacks by the invaders from Ikot Offiong.