

# Seven Fishermen Feared Dead in Boundary Dispute between A'Tbom, C'River

**Okon Bassey** in Uyo

About seven fishermen were feared dead in a renewed conflict between Ikot Offiong community in Odukpani Local Government Area (LGA) of Cross River State and the neighbouring communities in Oku Iboku, Itu LGA of Akwa Ibom State.

The incident was said to have occurred on Tuesday evening along the disputed water boundary linking Akwa Ibom at Itu LGA with Cross River at Odukpani LGA.

While security operatives have remained silent on the casualty figure in the latest

clash, one of the community leaders and a fisherman from Oku Iboku, Chief Effiong Eneh, alleged that seven persons were killed in the surprised attack.

He said the land dispute, which has lasted for over 100 years, has defied all known traditional and political solutions even before the creation of Akwa Ibom State out of the old Cross River State in 1987.

Describing the development as sad, he explained that the victims left for their fishing expedition at about 10 a.m. on Tuesday and never returned till the time of this report.

All the victims, he said

were from Oku Iboku, including three brothers from same parents, revealing that "three dead bodies have been recovered so far."

According to him, the youths of the area have been monitoring the water and still waiting for the remains of the other four to float to the sea shore.

Also lamenting, a native of one of the neighbouring communities, Ayadehe village, Bassey Offiong Williams, said because of the crises which have claimed several lives, people were warned to be cautious on their fishing businesses.

The office of the state Deputy Governor, Obong Moses Ekpo, which oversees boundary issues in the state could not confirm the report, as the Chief Press Secretary, Mr. Ekikere Umoh, said he was yet to be fully briefed on the incident.

The Police Public Relations Officer (PPRO), SP Odiko Macdon, said; "we have already commenced preliminary investigation into the incident."

He called for "pro-active measures by politicians and security agencies to bring a lasting peace to the crisis, adding: "I think politicians should come up with a political solution to the problem".