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3 dead, 40 injured as police, traders clash in Uyo

Written by Tony Nyong
Wednesday, 11 February 2009

UYO—AT least three traders were killed and scores of others injured yesterday in a clash between Uyo Main Market traders and men of Nigerian Police Force in the Akwa Ibom State capital.

Two of the casualties were identified as Uko, a GSM recharge card dealer and a WAI Brigade volunteer, Moses George.

Goods valued at some millions of naira were also lost to the early morning clash that lasted till about 3p.m and forced banks and other financial institutions in the vicinity to shut down operations.

Vanguard learnt that trouble started when the Task Force of the Environment Ministry tried to force the traders out of the streets where they had displayed their wares.

The traders were said to have chased the task force personnel with bottles and stones and vandalized one of the vehicles, a Hilux pickup van, marked AK-277-CO1 which they set ablaze.

The Task Force operatives, Vanguard also learnt, decided to invite the police to help enforce the directive of the state Ministry of Environment, which later led to the bloody clash that culminated in the burning of about three police vehicles.

Hoodlums, it was gathered, took advantage of the clash to loot several shops, molest innocent persons in the market and cause a stampede that left many injured with some admitted in hospitals.

While the President of the Uyo main market could not be reached for comments, the state Police Public Relations Officer, Mr. Gabriel Nghan, in a telephone conversation, said though he had been informed of the incident, he was yet to get the details of what may have led to the clash.

The Commissioner for Environment, Mr. Census Ekpu, while reacting to the incident said, "we have warned them, not once, not twice, we even had a meeting with the market women, but when my men got there today, it became a war".

The corpse of a WAI Brigade volunteer, Mr. Moses George, attached to the state ministry of environment was still lying by the road side along Nyong Essien street at press time, while the state Deputy Police commissioner, Mr. Nasir Oki, in the company of family members, visited the scene of the clash



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