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4 killed, 7 injured in renewed clash over oil on Anambra/Kogi border

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BY VINCENT UJUMADU

AWKA—FOUR persons from Aguleri, Anambra East local government area were killed on Monday, while seven others were seriously injured in a renewed clash between the people of Aguleri and Echeno/Odeke in Ibaji local government area of Kogi State.

The two border communities have been laying claims to the oil deposits on the Omambala River basin.

The clashes became more pronounced shortly after the commissioning of Orient Petroleum Refinery at Aguleri Otu in Anambra State by President Goodluck Jonathan last year.

Casualty figures on the Kogi side could not be ascertained at press time, although it was gathered that the people of Aguleri were taken unawares by the Kogi fighters.

Vanguard gathered that the latest clash, which occurred at about 3.00pm on Monday, involved the use of sophisticated weapons, even in the presence of security operatives guarding the buffer zone created by the National Boundary Commission in the area to forestall clashes between the warring communities.

It was also gathered that one of the mobile policemen guarding the buffer zone had allegedly informed Kogi people that Aguleri people were at the disputed area, adding that shortly after, Kogi people came in large numbers, armed with dangerous weapons, including automatic rifles usually handled by security operatives.

Monday's attack came on the heels of a peace committee meeting held between the communities last week at Idah in Kogi State, where the people of Aguleri expressed surprise yesterday that some people at Odeke were not prepared to see peace return to the area.

Anambra Police Public Relations Officer, PPRO, Mr. Emeka Chukwuemeka, confirmed the incident, but declined to give the casualty figures.

According to him, the matter is being investigated at the highest level of security and will be premature for him to make statement on the clash.

Following the frequent clashes in the area, the National Boundary Commission had met with the deputy governors of the two states on many occasions for the purpose of finding a lasting solution to the border problem.

At the last meeting chaired by the Director General of the National Boundary Commission, Dr. M.B. Ahmad, with the deputy governors of the two states and a representative of the surveyor general of the federation 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.

However, the people of Kogi were said to be insisting that despite the demarcated boundary between the old Kabba and old Onitsha provinces, the oil deposits in Omambala River belong to them.

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