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In Akwa Ibom: 2 policemen die, 2 missing in clash over N50,000 tapioca thief

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By Emmanuel Ayungbe

UYO—No fewer than six persons, including two policemen, were killed during violent clashes between youths and operatives of the Akwa Ibom State Police Command, weekend.

Two police officers are still missing as a result of the clash, said to have been caused by a young man that stole N50,000 worth of sliced cassava (tapioca).



Nigerian Police

A critically-injured policeman, who Vanguard learned serves at the 'C' Division, is currently receiving treatment at an undisclosed hospital.

According to reliable security sources, the injured officer is currently on danger list as a result of deep machete cuts, while two AK-47 rifles were also seized from policemen during the attack.

The incident, Vanguard gathered, occurred at Obot Ndom community in Etinan Local Government Area of the state, when police stormed the community situated within the Ekom Iman zone, to effect the arrest of some suspected criminals.

Clash

A source at the Command informed Vanguard the police swooped on the community when information reached the command that a teenager, accused of stealing sliced cassava (tapioca) worth N50,000 was beaten to death by angry youths of the community.

According to the source, "after beating him to death, his body was taken to the next village and buried in a shallow grave in the bush.

“The incident was reported to police, who later stormed the community for investigation and arrest of the suspects.”

The angry youths, it was learned, resisted arrest forcing policemen to retreat. Later, they returned, reinforced with more men, including operatives of the Special Anti-Robbery Squad, SARS, leading to the bloody clash.

In the shootout that followed, the gang leader, simply identified as Ubong, a former Chairman of Task Force on sale of truck stickers was killed by police.

The youths, who were heavily armed with sophisticated guns and charms, were said to have over-powered the policemen, killing two and injuring others.

One of the injured was said to have run to the palace of the village monarch, popularly called Eteidung, for refuge.

However, a source in the village linked the incident to a family feud involving the late Ubong, who was alleged to have beaten up his sister for insulting his wife.

Ubong's younger sister, it was learned, reported the matter to the police, who stormed the village to arrest him.

He added that Ubong resisted arrest and ordered his boys to confront the police, but was shot dead in the process, leading to the escalation of the clash.

Between Commissioner, ex-council boss

The Commissioner of Police, Mr. Donald Awunah, it was learned, led a crack team to the area to quell the crisis, but the youths prevented the CP's convoy from gaining entrance to the community.

He then walked with his men to the palace of the monarch and requested him to order the release of his men and the seized rifles, but was told the gang were only

loyal to a former Local Government chairman of Etinan.

The intervention of the former council chairman, Vanguard gathered, forced the youths to release the two rifles, while two policemen are still missing.

The state's Police Public Relations Officer, DSP Chukwu Ikechukwu, said: "Our men were ambushed by suspected kidnappers."

He revealed that the two rifles seized by the youths have been recovered while investigation is ongoing.

When Vanguard visited the community, police operatives were frantically searching the community, which is currently a ghost town, for their missing colleagues.

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