

13 feared dead over chieftaincy stool in Benue

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By Peter Duru

About 13 persons were feared dead in an early morning attack on Ukpogo community, Edikwu Apa Local Government Area of Benue State, yesterday, by suspected armed militia gang over disputed chieftaincy stool.

The attackers that reportedly invaded the community at about 4:30 am also left some of their victims injured.

Vanguard also gathered that the dispute over the stool of Alegwu of Edikwu that has claimed many lives in the community dates back to 1994 when an aggrieved contender to the stool (name withheld), who had been on self-exile since the dispute began, allegedly hired armed militia gangs.

He was said to have disagreed with the choice of the kingmakers, who elected late Chief Otokpa Imoni as Alegwu of Edikwu before his demise in 2018.

It was also gathered that for the timely intervention of the joint military operation in the state, code-named Operation Whirl Stroke, OPWS, who mobilised to forestall further attacks, the death toll and casualty figure would have been higher.

Confirming the attack, acting Alegwu of Edikwu, Chief Otokpa David Imoni, said the aggrieved contender had declared war on his people with the active support of some politicians and had overtime sent armed militia to attack his people to compel them to accept him as the traditional ruler even after taking the matter to court.

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He said: "This present one took place this morning (yesterday) when hooded gun-wielding militiamen entered Ukpogo community at about 4:30 am and started shooting anything that showed sign of life.

"13 dead bodies were found after their departure around 6:00 am."

Contacted, the Police Public Relations Officer, DSP Catherine Anene, confirmed the attack and the 13 deaths.

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