

Gunfight among rival gangs claims seven lives in Bayelsa

ON AUGUST 20, 2020 5:14 PM IN METRO

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By Samuel Oyadongha – Yenogoa

No fewer than seven persons reportedly lost their lives at the coastal settlement of Oluasiri in Nembe Local Government Area of Bayelsa State following a gunfight among rival gangs in the area over alleged control of illegal bunkering and kidnapping operations.

The incident, it was learned, occurred Wednesday night in the coastal enclave bordering Bayelsa and Rivers State.

It was reliably learned that the violent skirmish among three armed gangs erupted when one of the gang was accused of allegedly withholding high calibre guns being used by all the gangs during illegal operations on the high sea.

A community source who spoke anonymously said the three gangs involved in the gun duel are located in Izakiri, Ben-Ama and Isiah-Ama

communities.

This axis, according to the source, has become a den for armed militias operating along the Bayelsa, Rivers corridor.

It was further learned that the Bayelsa armed gangs from Ben-Ama and Isiah-Ama camps suffered the highest casualty in the bloody battle that lasted several hours.

"We also know that the affected gangs who lost foot soldiers have started burying their dead because the community does not allow fresh dead bodies kept in the community. Among the dead were two boys from a single parent.

"Every security agencies are aware of the illegal activities of these boys. The umbrella body of Ijaw youths are aware and have kept quiet. The Oluasiri as a community, have cried out severally over the activities of these people, but no action taken," the source said.

Also, another indigene who spoke on condition of anonymity because of his safety said: "it is a sad development, we have made several representations to the government calling for special security presence in the area.

"It is clearly irresponsible not to attend to the needs of that area. That area should be a special development zone for Bayelsa in view of its strategic location and in view of the boundary issue among others.

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"Bayelsa government has been totally complacent, it is only interested in the billions that comes from that area as revenue and not a kobo is spent to secure the place and give the people a sense of belonging."

The Paramount Ruler of Isiah-Ama, HRH. Iyerite Chiefson Awululu, who spoke on phone Thursday, confirmed that the gun battle was among

militant factions in the area.

"The gunbattle last for hours. And they have suffered some deaths. Seven or eight persons died in the clash.

"From reports reaching my subjects, no innocent indigene was killed in the battle. And we have reported to the Local Government Chairman. The indigenes of the community had to cry out to avoid being hit by stray bullets."

The Chairman of the Nembe Local Government Area, Hon. Alalibo West, on Wednesday night, said the Bayelsa gangs gunfight have been reported to the relevant security agencies including the State Commissioner of Police, Mike Okoli, the State Governor, Senator Douye Diri.

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"We have reported to the relevant authorities and have requested for gunboat patrol to calm the situation. And I learnt the situation is now under control," he said.

Contacted, spokesman of the state police command, Mr Asinim Bustwat, said the security agencies are making concerted efforts to identify the militant groups.

Though he was silent on the casualty figure the spokesman said: "the Bayelsa State Police Command in synergy with other sister security agencies in the state, have commenced investigations into the sporadic gunshots witnessed at Oluasiri, Nembe Local Government Area, Bayelsa State.

"Information at the disposal of the Command revealed that on 19 August 2020, at about 1945 hours, there were sporadic gunshots witnessed by the residents of Oluasiri Community in Nembe Local Government Area of the State.

"It is believed that the gunshots were as a result of a clash by rival militant groups in the creeks of Oluasiri community.

"The Commissioner of Police Bayelsa State Command CP Mike Okoli fsi, wishes to reassure members of the Public that a joint operation by security agencies is ongoing to fish out the perpetrators and ensure the safety of lives of residents of the Community and the protection of critical infrastructures."

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