

# ① Soldiers kill 11 gunmen in Abia

By Idowu Isamotu

**N**o fewer than 11 gunmen were killed yesterday by soldiers of the 144 Battalion, stationed at Ariaria junction, along the Enugu- Port Harcourt expressway, who engaged them in a fierce battle.

It was gathered that the gunmen, said to be numbering about 50, engaged the soldiers at their checkpoint at the Ariaria junction.

\* The incident came less than 48 hours after three policemen were ambushed and gruesomely murdered by hoodlums in Abiriba, Ohafia Local Government Area of the state.

According to a witness who did not want his name in print, before the gunmen arrived at the area, the soldiers had gathered intelligence and laid in wait for them.

He said as soon as the gunmen arrived, they opened fire, but the soldiers

responded. In the ensuing gun duel, which was said to have lasted for over 30 minutes, 11 persons were shot dead as they bowed to the superior firepower of the soldiers.

Other members of the gang reportedly fled with bullet wounds.

However, there are conflicting reports about the number of casualties. While some sources said 16 persons were killed among them, a soldier, a top military source in Aba, said only 11 gunmen were killed while there was no casualty on the side of the army.

Reacting to the incident, the Abia State Government commended the soldiers for their gallantry, noting that it is committed to the protection of lives and property of the residents of the state.

The Commissioner for Information in the state, Chief John Okiyi Kalu, who stated this, warned youths of the state not to put themselves in harm's way by attacking security agents under any guise.