

# Bandits kill policeman, seven others in Rivers

**S**USPECTED hoodlums dressed in military camouflage yesterday turned the New Year celebrations into a

*From Kelvin Ebiri,  
Port Harcourt*

nightmare for residents in Port Harcourt, Rivers

State as they killed eight persons, including a policeman in two separate attacks.

According to the

police, the gang stormed one Lulu Plaza at Rumuosi and later Rumuekini, on the outskirts of the Rivers State

capital. They were alleged to have fired at a group of people who were celebrating the

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• The Babington twins: The first babies of the year in Lagos...yesterday.

## Plane with 102 passengers missing in Indonesia

**A** BOEING 737-400 plane with 102 people on board has been declared missing in Indonesia after sending distress signals.

According to the *Agence France Presse (AFP)*, the passenger aircraft was flying between the cities of Surabaya, on the central island of Java, and Manado, on Sulawesi Island, when contact was lost.

Indonesian Transport Minister Hatta Radjasa said the plane was believed to be near Mamuju in South Sulawesi province, 750 kilometres (470 miles)

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PHOTO: VICTOR LAMIKANRA

# Bandits on rampage, kill eight persons in Rivers

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New Year at about 1.30 a.m., killing seven of them.

Amid the reign of terror, the new Rivers State Commissioner of Police, Mr. Felix Ogbaudu, assured residents of the state of the preparedness of the police to guarantee their safety. He also urged them to volunteer timely information to enable the force to contain the activities of miscreants in the state.

In a statement made available to *The*

*Guardian*, the Rivers State Police Command Public Relations Officer, Mrs. Ireju Barasua, explained that witnesses alleged that the men were mistaken for military men on patrol because of the uniform they wore. But an unconfirmed report said the killing might have been a reprisal attack.

Sources in the affected communities claimed that the attack might have been caused by a violent contest for the control of the political space in the area. The sources said that two fac-

tions involved in the conflict were believed to be supporters of rival groups linked to some top politicians in the state.

But Barasua said the attackers used a *Volkswagen* mini bus with an unknown registration number to launch the two deadly attacks. She said: "These cultists fired at a group of people who were celebrating the end-of-year eve. On receipt of the distress call, the command deployed anti-patrol teams to the scene where it was discovered

that seven persons whose identities are yet unknown had been shot dead."

The police spokesperson also disclosed that at about 2.30 a.m. yesterday, the police, based on intelligence report, stormed a residential house at No. 5 Igwuruta Road, Rumukwurisi, where it was alleged that some hoodlums were plotting some nefarious acts.

The suspects on sighting the police, Barasua said, fired at them, prompting the police-

men to retaliate. Amid the shooting that lasted for several minutes, two of the miscreants and a policeman lost their lives. The police, however, succeeded in arresting four of the suspects and injured one who as at yesterday was receiving treatment over injuries he sustained during the crossfire.

Barasua said the items recovered from the suspects included one locally made pistol, one live cartridge and another unexpended cartridge. She explained that two

of the hoodlums, including one lady escaped with bullet wounds.

"In the interim, the Commissioner of Police, Rivers State Command has assured the public of adequate protection at all times. And has enjoined them to support the police with useful and timely information that would assist them in discharging their responsibility to the public. The Commissioner of Police appeals to the public to respect and uphold the sanctity of life," she added.