

One feared dead as soldiers, militants clash in Calabar

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A group of suspected militants yesterday in Calabar, Cross River State, engaged men of the Nigerian Army in a bloody gun-duel as one person was feared dead.

The incident, according to an eyewitness, occurred in Anantigha, the local council headquarters of Calabar South causing panic among residents of the area.

For the past two years, residents of Calabar and the state at large have been leaving in fear following the marauding activities of kidnappers, armed robbers and cultists thus making Cross River one of the unsafe states in Nigeria.

Kidnappers operate freely and business activities have slowed down tremendously in the state capital as most shops, especially in Calabar South Local Council, close shops early while nightlife is almost gone.

A resident of Calabar, who simply gave his name as John, said: "Calabar is not the Calabar we used to know. Imagine I cannot stay in my shop beyond 6:00 p.m. for fear of criminals."

Another eyewitness said the suspected militants who came in large number with about two boats "stormed this our area from one of the many creeks of Calabar South. We were really afraid and it was as if it was war. Maybe they came to kidnap someone suspected be into oil bunkering in Anantigha. Things are really bad and the government should do something. Everyday, we live in fear.

"The militants came dressed in military camouflage with red cloths tied on their heads. Their presence really caused panic and this is what we see here but thank God they ran into some soldiers who were patrolling the area and there was a heavy shoot-out.

It could not be confirmed if anyone was killed but the eyewitness said: "The soldiers there shot one. There was heavy blood on his body but he still managed to run. There was blood all over the ground. This incident happened around 7:00 a.m. at

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Anantigha by Jebbs Street close to Aqua Vista Resort. We are not aware the soldiers killed anybody except maybe they later discovered his body in the bush but there was blood everywhere. There was so much shoot-out in the area.”

The Public Relations Officer of the 13 Brigade of the Nigerian Army in Calabar, Captain Kayode Owolabi, confirmed the incident but could not ascertain if there was any casualty.

He, however, promised to get back to the press on getting details of the matter.

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