

New Year Tragedy: Cultists Kill 17

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Violence greeted the New Year in Port Harcourt on Monday as 17 persons were killed in attacks suspected to have been carried out by cultists.

In Port Harcourt

Among the dead was a policeman on duty around Rumuokrushi, Obio/Akpor Council in Rivers State, where seven persons died in what seemed a re-

prisal strike by a rival gang.

Sources said the gunmen, dressed in police and military uniforms, opened fire on their victims, then vanished.

In a separate attack on

Rumuosi community on the East/West Road, another seven bodies were picked up after they were attacked by persons in the same type of uniforms.

Three persons were killed in a shoot-out at Lulu Plaza

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night club in the Orazi area of Port Harcourt.

It was difficult to ascertain what led to this duel although there were claims that the rival group is loyal to politicians fighting for the control of the axis.

Some claimed that the attack was carried out by mem-

bers of the same gang, others said the incident was robbery related.

On Christmas day, five youths were killed during a masquerade outing, known as "Nwantam," in the Elelenwo area in Port Harcourt.

Scores of others equally died in the main Kalabari ar-

reas of Asari-Toru, Degema, and Ahoada-East Councils in cult-related violence in the week between Christmas and the New Year.

Police Public Relations Officer, Ireju Barasua, confirmed the killings, including the one involving a policeman.

She said an investigation

has been launched into the matter.

Rivers has been a major flashpoint for all kinds of violence since 1999, resulting in the loss of several lives.

But the new Police Commissioner, Felix Ogbauda, who assumed duty five days ago, has vowed to reverse the trend.