

Militants' attack: Police count losses

• 125 suspects freed • Dynamites used

POLICE in Port Harcourt, Rivers State have explained why militants invaded its two stations in the Rivers State capital last Sunday and released many detainees.

In the attack, which lasted from about noon to 8pm, the militants succeeded in releasing about 125 detainees while two civilians were killed in the crossfire between the police and the rampaging militants. Several people were injured in the ensuing melee.

In addition, seven police patrol vans were torched

From Clarice Azuatalam,
Port Harcourt

alongside other vehicles that were damaged in the violent clash.

Giving the situation report in Port Harcourt yesterday, the Commissioner of Police (CP), Mr Felix Ogbadu said that militants belonging to the camp of Mr Soboma George, the wanted former second-in-command to Mr Ateke Tom, another wanted man, invaded the police stations to free George, who had

been detained in one of the police cells for nearly one month, under a pseudo name, for alleged traffic offence.

His account contradicts that of the militants who sent an email to the media saying George was arrested on Sunday, same day he was released by them (militants).

Ogbadu told reporters that the militants actually attacked the police stations with dynamites and sophisticated weapons, "but there

were no casualties on both sides besides some injuries on some persons."

The attack appeared to have caught the police napping, Ogbadu said. Initially, police thought that it was another jail-break attempt. For this reason, the CP said, the command deployed some of its men to Port Harcourt Prisons, but in a well-planned operation, "another group of militants moved into the state CID and the central police sta-

tion where they threw dynamites and shot sporadically until they accomplished their task of releasing their men in police cells."

The Police boss also admitted that no arrest has been made but that "the police have swung into action to try and re-arrest some of the released inmates."

The Assistant Inspector General (AIG) in charge of zone 6, Calabar, Mr Adewale Ajakaiye, who breezed in shortly after the CP's briefing, said he was not surprised by the attack, but that it was unfortunate that the police did not know the nature of the attack before it occurred, adding that "we are going to win the war."