

Gunmen kill four in Port Harcourt

UNIDENTIFIED gunmen, for several hours yesterday, held Port Harcourt, the Rivers State capital, by the throat, moving round the Garden City where they engaged in a shooting spree.

Four persons were killed in the incident and 13 others received serious gunshot injuries, as the gunmen, in one instance, shot into a crowd at a bus stop on Aba Road.

The unknown gunmen even drove near the Government House, the state's seat of power, and were visibly unbothered as police guarding the official residence and office of Governor Peter Odili, opened fire on them. They continued their movement down to the flyover at Abali motor park.

Eyewitnesses said that the gunmen, who were driving in a bus, started their shooting spree from Abuja Estate. From there, they moved to Lagos bus stop, then on to Station

From Clarice Azuatalam,
Port Harcourt

road/ Azikiwe Road.

In front of the State High Court, it was said that they stopped and shot several times into the air before moving on.

Trying to connect Aba Road, in front of Nigerian Tide newspaper office, which faces the Abali Park, the gunmen killed two men. One of the victims, a bus conductor was shot in the head and the other in the rib. Several people were injured while trying to flee the scene.

Having connected Aba Road, and still shooting, the gunmen killed a woman selling roasted plantain at the Fire Service junction. She was shot in the buttocks. Several persons were also injured there.

Without caring a hoot, the gunmen moved to Aba Road, still shooting. A man was hit at Mobile Filling Station at Water Lines junction.

It was said that they terminated their movement around Water Lines/New GRA.

Some human rights activists in the Garden City attributed the violence to infighting within the ruling Peoples Democratic Party (PDP).

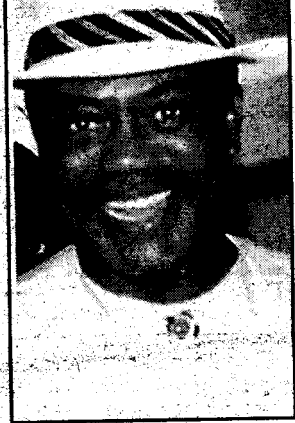
The trigger-happy men moved round the metropolis without any challenge.

Police Commissioner Felix Ogbaudu, who confirmed this daylight siege on Port Harcourt, said he was in

Bonny when the operation started. He confirmed that two of his men were wounded in the attack and that the gunmen were using double-barrel guns.

At the time of this report, the identities of all the victims had not been disclosed. No arrests had been made.

"We have so far received 13 persons with serious gunshot wounds. Two of them have died, while some of them are still in critical condition," said a worker at



•Odili

Teme Hospital in Port Harcourt, who asked not to be named because he is not authorised to speak to the media.

Military helicopters flew over the city as policemen pursued the gunmen, witnesses said.

Violence over the past 18 months has forced thousands of foreign workers to flee the Niger Delta.

There are 15 foreign hostages being held by various militant groups.

16 gun-out houses