

Gunmen kill seven in P'Harcourt

Soni Daniel, Port Harcourt

SOME gunmen, suspected to be cultists, killed seven persons on New Year day in Port Harcourt.

Eyewitnesses said the gunmen, who were dressed in military fatigue, opened fire on their victims near Rumuosi and Rumuokini in Obio/Akpor Local Government Area.

One of the victims was a policeman, who was caught in the crossfire as he attempted to chase away the killers.

As at the time of filing this report, the cause of the attack was not known, but the natives of the community said it was triggered by

a fierce contest for the control of political space in the area.

Supporters of two cult groups, sympathetic to some top politicians in the state, were involved in the attack.

One faction is said to have enjoyed support from a top official of the present administration, thereby incurring the wrath of the other faction.

The Police Public Relations Officer for Rivers State, Mrs. Ireju Barasua, confirmed the killings but she said the command was investigating the cause of the mayhem.

She also said that one of the dead was a policeman.

Barasua said the com-

mand had begun investigations into the attack.

Communal and cult clashes have been rampant in many parts of Rivers State, especially with the advent of political groups struggling to assert their supremacy.

The latest attack came barely one week after gunmen opened fire on their victims around Elelenwo on the Christmas Day and killed five persons.

The Commissioner, Rivers State Police Command, Mr. Felix Ogbaudu, on Monday asked the people of the state to respect the sanctity of life.

Ogbaudu, who is barely four days old in the state, promised to halt the killings.