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UNIPOINT lecturer, three others killed

By Ibanga Isine, Port Harcourt

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Four people, including a lecturer and a nursing mother, were on Tuesday feared dead in a cult attack at the University of Port Harcourt, Choba, Rivers State.

Some other students and a professor were said to have been injured by the cult members in the incident that occurred shortly before the state's Truth and Reconciliation Commission invited former Governor Peter Odili, and a former Minister of Transport, Dr. Abiye Sekibo, to appear before it.

A source, who gave the name of the late don as Dr. Ozuru, claimed that members of the gang came into the university with three motorcycles armed with AK47 rifles.

He said that on arrival, they went straight to the office of the Chief Security Officer of the university but shot Ozuru to death when they did not find the CSO.

The source explained that the lecturer had gone to meet with the security chief when the cult members arrived. He said that the professor and the other students were injured when the gang started shooting sporadically.

Police authorities confirmed the deaths, saying two of those feared killed were members of the gang.

Our correspondent learnt that the situation was brought under control by men of the Joint Task Force who were alerted by the authorities of the university.

A JTF operative said, "We got a distress call from the school and we came in and chased cultists who tried to escape on motorcycles to Aluu.

"As we chased them, they later abandoned their bikes and ran into the bush but we got three of them. We are still searching for the others."

Our correspondent gathered at the university, that the suspected cult members were paraded before the Vice-Chancellor, Prof. Don Baridam, and the university community.

When contacted, the Police Public Relations Officer in the state, Mrs. Rita Inoma-Abey, confirmed the attack, the deaths and the arrest.

Meanwhile, Odili and Sekibo have been summoned by the TRC to defend their indictment in the crisis in the state.

The state Governor, Mr. Rotimi Amaechi, had, during the commencement

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of the public sitting in Port Harcourt on Monday, accused some politicians of fuelling the crisis in the state.

A source in the Justice Kayode Eso-led commission told our correspondent on Tuesday that letters of the invitation had been forwarded to Odili and Sekibo.

The source, who pleaded not to be named, said that Odili had sent to the commission a reply to an earlier letter.

He added that it was based on the concerns of the former governor that the TRC dispatched another letter to him.

He said that Odili had in his response to the commission's invitation expressed worry over his safety in the event of his appearance before the panel.

According to him, the former governor had argued that the prevailing security situation in the state was not favourable for him to personally appear and give evidence.

The source, who said the commission was awaiting Odili's reaction to the second letter, did not say whether Sekibo was willing to appear personally.

When contacted by our correspondent, the commission's Secretary, Mr. O. F. Oguru, declined comments on whether Odili and Sekibo had written to complain about their safety or not.

Attempts to speak with the media consultant to the former governor, Mr. Emma Okah, on the matter also failed as calls to his telephones did not go through.

Eso had said that many politicians were accused of arming youths to unleash violence on their perceived opponents and some residents during election.

At the commission's sitting on Tuesday, two witnesses - Major Napoleon Ogam and Chief Thompson Ibulubo - alleged that Sekibo and the leader of the Niger Delta Vigilante Movement, Mr. Ateke Tom, were responsible for the killing and destruction of properties in Okrika Local Government Area.

Ogam alleged that Sekibo recruited Tom and other youths to hunt down political opponents.

He said trouble started in 2001 after the demise of the former Amanyabo of Okrika when the leadership of the Peoples Democratic Party allegedly imposed a new monarch on the people.

He said, "Those who opposed the imposition of Chief Alfred Abam as the Amanyabo of Okrika were also killed and their houses destroyed."

In his evidence, Ibulubo claimed that Sekibo, the slain former South-South National Vice-Chairman of the PDP, Chief Aminoasari Dikibo, and Tom, were responsible for the assassination of one Chief Obolobulo.

When Eso asked Ibulubo and Ogam if they would forgive those who

visited mayhem on them, they did not respond.

They later promised to pardon them if part of what they lost were restored.

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