

Soldiers, suspected cultists in gun battle in Rivers

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Inspector-General of Police, Solomon Arase

Chukwudi Akasike, Port Harcourt

THERE was a heavy shootout on Sunday between soldiers and some suspected cult members in Ubete community in Ahoada West Local Government Area of Rivers State.

Though the casualty figure could not be ascertained as of the time of filing this report, it was gathered that the shootout began on Saturday after soldiers raided some of the criminal hideouts within the area.

Sources said the soldiers had stormed four local government areas in the state, including Ahoada West, where crime was believed to have gone to a worrisome level, with a view

to arresting those involved in violence and other crimes.

The deafening shootout in Ahoada West, according to sources, forced some residents of the area to stay indoors.

It was gathered that the armed youths, who appeared not to be scared by the heavy presence of soldiers in the areas, had engaged the security operatives in a fierce gun battle.

An indigene of the area, who gave his name as Joseph, said, "We learnt that a rival cult group killed a member of another cult group on Saturday. While the deceased was about to be buried, his colleagues decided to unleash mayhem to show their anger.

"I learnt that nobody was killed, but motorists and other people making use of the main road in the community were molested. I think that is why some soldiers came. Policemen were also around yesterday when the tension was building up in the community."

Confirming the shootout between the soldiers and suspected criminals, the Assistant Army Public Relations Officer of 2 Brigade, Captain Eli Lazarus, said the Army had embarked on an operation in Ahoada West.

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Contact: editor@punchng.com