

South-South/South-East

Soldiers kill five cultists in Rivers gun duel

Friday Amobi,
Port Harcourt

FIVE suspected cultists believed to be members of the Icclander were on Sunday killed in Obelle community, Emohua Local Government Area of Rivers State by the military during a shootout.

This was happening as five people that were reportedly kidnapped by the same cultists on Friday around Elele town in Ikwerre LGA of Rivers State regained their freedom.

Following the recurrent

killings and other cult-related activities that were threatening peace in Rivers State on Sunday, the army trailed the hoodlums to their new camp in Obelle.

A community source, who related the development to our correspondent, stated that when the military entered the community in search of the cultists who fled Ibaa community to build a new camp in Obelle, the cultists opened fire on the army.

The source said that when the boys first attacked the

soldiers, they (soldiers) called for reinforcement before going after the hoodlums.

It was gathered that the soldiers, who visited the area, chased the cultists under heavy gunfire into the Obelle-Elele forest.

The PUNCH learnt that the five suspected cultists were gunned down by the army during the shootout that lasted for about six hours.

When the cultists loosed their grip on the community, five out of six hostages escaped from the kidnappers' den.

The cultists had ambushed a commercial bus coming from Anambra State to Port Harcourt last Friday and reportedly whisked away six people at gunpoint into a forest in the area.

One of the victims who escaped, Mr. Felix Uche, revealed that they were released following the incursion of the military into the camp of the suspected cult gang.

Uche, who spoke to our correspondent on the telephone, shortly after he regained freedom, narrated

their experience in the hands of the kidnappers from Friday till early hours of Monday (yesterday).

He said, "They tied our hands, our mouth and our legs. They also used candlestick light to burn our flesh. We were there without food and water.

"They forced us to call our relatives so that they will bring ransom for our release, but when they heard serious gunshots from the military around the forest where we were held hostage, they decided to free us and then ran for their lives."

Uche revealed that the sixth victim was thoroughly beaten by the kidnappers after he attempted to escape earlier, adding that the victim was still ridden in pains and could not run out of the forest when the army struck.

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