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### 10 killed in Rivers' cult war

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#### • Policeman, 2 others shot dead

From TONY JOHN, Port Harcourt and DAVID ONWUCHEKWA, Nnewi There is tension in Etche Local Government Area of Rivers State following a month-long cult war even as armed mobile policemen had been deployed in the area to restore peace. About 10 people have been killed so far. The casualty include two people who were reportedly shot dead last weekend while two others were critically wounded.

A source disclosed that most of the attacks were carried out near the council's headquarters in Okechi, usually affected non-cultists. The development has forced the council's staff to close early.

The recent killing occurred on Sunday night, when hoodlums, suspected to be members of dreaded Degbam cult group unleashed terror on the community.

One of the deceased, Nnamdi Ajaegbu, was said to be the only child of his parents, whose father is based in the United States.

A source said some cult boys from Obibi, Etche, last Sunday night stormed Umuoga and Amaku in Igbo community, Okehi town and went on killing spree.

The deceased had refused to visit home because of the threat from the cult boys.

Policemen were deployed in Okehi flashpoints which include Obibi, Okehi, Igbo and their neighbouring communities.

The command's deputy spokesperson, Grace Iringe-Koko, an Assistant Superintendent of Police (ASP), confirmed the deployment of policemen in the troubled communities.

Meanwhile, a policeman attached to Nnewi Central Police Station (CPS), Anambra State, was last

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weekend shot dead at Akaboukwu Uruagu Nnewi by an independent oil marketer and a member of vigilance group who mistook the victim for a thief in his compound, according to eyewitnesses.

The deceased policeman led an operation with other colleagues from the CPS. He allegedly jumped a fence around 9pm to arrest a suspect in the compound of the oil marketer who allegedly shot the victim. He died on his way to the hospital.

Although, the suspected killer was arrested, family of the policeman besieged the CPS, demanding justice, a situation that nearly led to a free-for-all, but for the early intervention of the Nnewi Area Commander.

Meanwhile, a member of a vigilance group in Ezengwu Ebe community Ukpok in Nnewi South Local Government Area allegedly killed two women and injured three others when his gun fell off his hands at a burial last weekend. Eyewitnesses said the suspect and the chairman of the vigilance group were arrested by the police.

The Commissioner of Police, Mr Gwary Usman, had during a tour of police formations in Nnewi area, said that a new blueprint for the operations of vigilance groups would soon be released.

Contacted, the police spokesman, Mr Emeka Chukwuemeka, a Deputy Superintendent (DSP), could not comment on the two incidents, saying he was on tour with the commissioner.

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