



L-R: President Muhammadu Buhari, Akwa Ibom State Governor, Udom Emmanuel and President Paul Biya of Cameroun, in Yaounde yesterday.

Cult war: Soldiers take over deserted Aggah community, death toll rises to 19

...Residents still sleeping in farms, neighbouring communities

From **Chris Anucha**,
Port Harcourt

SOLDIERS have taken over Aggah community in Ogba/Egbema/Ndoni Local Government Area of Rivers State, where there was a bloody clash between two cult groups, De-gbam and De-well.

It was gathered yesterday that three more bodies had been retrieved from the bush, bringing the total number of murdered persons to 19.

There was heavy presence of security men, especially stern-looking soldiers when Daily Sun visited yesterday. The soldiers were seen ordering people entering into Egbema to raise their hands, frisking them thoroughly, before allowing them to continue their

journey.

Investigation also confirmed that residents of Mgbede and Aggah communities, who fled their homes as a result of the cult war, were still taking refuge in their farm settlements close to Okansu community in Ogba.

A community leader in Aggah, who spoke with Daily Sun on the condition of anonymity, said the sporadic gunshots witnessed in the past two weeks had ceased since three days the community was 'militarised'.

Efforts to speak with the traditional ruler of Aggah, His Royal Highness, Eze Ignatius Ekezie, the Ezeali II of Aggah, were futile. One of his aides said: "He is not in the mood to speak to press for now."

There has been a rag-

ing cult war in Aggah community for more than two weeks now. It was allegedly triggered by job opportunities offered by one of the multi-national oil companies in the area. Those involved in distributing the job opportunities allegedly decided to give them to members of their families. The allegation resulted in a clash between De-gbam and De-Well cult groups used sophisticated weapons to unleash mayhem in the community. In the process, 19 persons were killed, while not less than 50 buildings were burnt by the cultists.

The clash also turned the community to a ghost town, as the residents, including prominent sons and daughters, fled their homes.

An indigene of Ogba/Egbema/Ndoni LGA, who pleaded that his identity be concealed told Daily Sun: "The Aggah crisis erupted a week after the flow station of Italian oil giant, Nigeria Agip Oil company, located at Ebocha Egbema went up in flames, following multiple explosions, caused by failing, aged equipment of the company.

"This incident threw the Egbema communities into severe environmental hazards and economic hardships. As they were trying to absorb the shock, the deadly cult war started. As I am talking to you now, no relief materials, no medicare or rehabilitation efforts by the Rivers State government and the relevant agencies."