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Cult war claims 8 in Benin

From **Tony Osauzo**, Benin

EIGHT persons, including a party agent, have been killed in different parts of Benin City, Edo State, and environs in the past three days in the raging cult war between the Aye and Eyiye confraternities.

① An undergraduate, John Terry, was reportedly killed along Upper Uwa Street, off M.M. Way, in Benin City on Tuesday night.

Witnesses said Terry, who was engaged as polling agent to one of the political parties in the February 16 elections that did not hold, was beaten to death with rods and sticks by his assailants.

② In another incident, a father of four, Africa, was yesterday morning hacked to death at Aifuwa Junction after shots fired at him did not penetrate his body. His corpse was dumped at the Central Hospital's mortuary.

③ At the Three House area of Upper Sokponba, Ikpoba-Okha Local Government Area, traders and shop owners scammed for safety as suspected cultists robbed passers-by and shot into the air.

Two youths belonging to a rival cult group were shot dead in the process.

A pharmaceuticals shop owner in the area who pleaded anonymity said more than 20 persons ran into his shop when the shooting started and they lay on the floor to avoid being hit by stray bullets.

He said traders in the area now close their shops at 7:30pm since Sunday.

"I was inside my shop when I received a call that I should lock my shop and go home because the area was about to scatter. As I stood up to tell my boys to lock up, I saw people running into my store to take refuge.

All of us were on the floor while shootings were on. We later heard many people were robbed and two boys were killed," he said.

Another witness said policemen later stormed the area and started arresting innocent residents and bystanders.

④ On Sunday night, Osato Okunkpolor, manager of a hotel owned by ex-international footballer, Osaze Odemwingie, was killed by cultists during a shootout.

Governor Godwin Obaseki had in December last year unveiled a new security architecture in the state known as "Operation Wabazigan" (Stop all bad things) with new 30 Hilux trucks, 50 patrol vehicles equipped with communications gadgets, two armed personnel carriers and motorcycles.

Meanwhile, spokesman for the Edo State Police Command, DSP Chidi Nwabuzor, said the police have set up security measures to make sure the city is safe and protected.