

Gunmen kill 8 in Rivers

By George Onah

PORT HARCOURT—
EIGHT people were
killed and seven others

wounded, three of them seriously, yesterday, after six gunmen allegedly dressed in Mobile police uniform fired sporadically into a gathering of youths at Rumuekini Community in Obio/Akpor Local Government Area of Rivers State.

The scene of the killing — a nursery school compound — was littered with blood. Witnesses who do not want their names in print said the men who drove in a Kombi Volkswagen bus and a two-door Honda Prelude car, arrived the school at about 1.45 a.m when the youths were having a party. Without warning, the men were said to have walked calmly through the entrance of the freshly fenced gate made of

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palm fronds, after which five of them aimed their rifles at a group of boys and opened fire killing them instantly. Four others were wounded.

In spite of the commotion that ensued, the gunmen drove quietly along the untarred road out of the place

and across the East-West Highway, leading to the University of Port Harcourt and connecting Rivers State with Bayelsa and Delta States.

In the neighbouring community of Rumuosi overlooking Rumuekini Town, the uniformed men were hailed by some unsuspecting youths celebrating the dawn of the New Year. However, unexpectedly, the men were said to have shot at three other boys on the arm, stomach and shoulder, injuring them critically.

Witnesses said the intestines of the boy who was shot in the stomach sprawled out and had to be held by the boy in his hands as he screamed for help. "We ran away for a while but returned to help when the 'mobile men' drove off, not even in a hurry," said a witness.

Vanguard gathered that the party was held for the New Year as well as for some of the youths of the community who had distinguished themselves in academics or had gained admission to tertiary institutions in the state and elsewhere.

Desks and benches that were used to barricade the makeshift fence, apparently to restrict uninvited guests, were scattered in different directions. It was a sign that the fun seekers had scurried out of the place when shooting started. Residents of Rumuosi and their Rumuekini neighbours could not explain the reason for the killings and shootings.

At a private clinic where three of the injured were taken for attention, a medical staff said they offered to treat them "not minding that the wounds were bullet injuries. We could not turn them back because some respected people came along to say they witnessed the shooting."

The Police PRO, Ireju Barasua (DSP) was not available for comment but a senior police officer who said he did not want to be mentioned, confirmed the incident, saying: "Yes, it is true but we are investigating whether the men are policemen or not and the motive for the killing. Our spokeswoman will get back to you."

