

Army confirms killing 4 policemen in Rivers

By Jimitota Onoyume

PORT HARCOURT—THE Nigerian army yesterday confirmed that its men attached to the Joint Task Force in Ogbakiri area of the state actually opened fire on the four policemen that lost their lives Tuesday in the area. But contrary to Police account in the state, the army said the men were shot dead at about 3 a.m on Tuesday.

The army PRO, Major Sagir Musa who spoke to the *Vanguard* on phone said the soldiers mistook the people for robbers.

Regretting the sad incident he said an investigation team had already been constituted to unearth the circumstance surrounding the killing. He however pleaded with the Police not to see the sad occurrence as a deliberate act on the part of the army.

"No Nigerian army will de-

liberately kill any Police man. Every body in the state now knows that the Joint Task Force is in operation at Ogbakiri. Those deployed were on regular patrol when they met four plain clothes human beings.

The vehicle they were using was not marked. On approaching them, they (Police men) cocked their rifles. Some even fired. Our men had to fire back".

The forgoing assertions have further deepened puzzles on the issue. At press time most people were wondering what the Police men, an Inspector, a Sergeant, Corporal and a Constable could be doing at that time at an area reputed to be a thriving ground for bunkering operations.

Meanwhile, at the state Police headquarters on Moscow road, the Commissioner of Police, Mr. Felix Ogbaudu was said to be away. Even the PPRO, Mrs. Baresua Ireju could not be reached for com-

ments. But the Police PPRO had told newsmen on Tuesday that preliminary investigations showed that there was a robbery operation in the area at about 10.30 am. And the Police men received a distress call but when they got to the scene the underworld men had fled. So they opted to be patrolling on the East West road when they met their end. She did not say if they were shot by men of the JTF.

It would be recalled that the army deployed troops to Ogbakiri area about three weeks ago for what they termed cordoned and search operations. The army PRO, Major Musa had told newsmen then that the action was necessitated by the obvious fact that Ogbakiri had become the hot bed of militancy in the state.

It was in that community the JTF recently secured the release of some expatriate hostages at separate times from the militants.

By John Ighodaro

CALABAR—CHAIRMAN of the Bakasi Local Government Area, Mr. Ani Esin, has been suspended for two months by the Cross River State House of Assembly.

This followed an address sent to the House by the state governor, Mr. Donald Duke, indicating that a report from the auditor-general of the state points to a possible misappropriation of funds on the part of the Bakassi LGA chairman.

Reacting to the letter from the governor, the State House of Assembly then set up a 4-member committee headed by Alhaji Mikhael Asuquo to investigate the matter and report to the House for necessary action. Other members of the committee include Mr. Ferdinand Okpokan, Mr. Mark Obi, and Itaya Asuquo Nyong.

Speaking to *Vanguard* in Calabar a source at the State House of Assembly said the two-month suspension is not a swift admission on the part of the House that the LGA chairman has been judged but "he has been suspended for two months so that he would not be in a position to tamper with investigations."

to break the indecent dressing among our youths?