

28 cops die in auto crash

● *9 militants
killed in
gunfight with
soldiers*

By Samuel Oyadongha

YENAGOA—TWENTY-EIGHT mobile policemen on a special duty trip from

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Taraba to Rivers State, yesterday, lost their lives in a motor accident at Aliade, Benue State, while nine suspected militants were shot dead also yesterday by men of the Joint Military Task Force for the Niger Delta in Bayelsa State.

The militants were killed in a shoot-out at a military checkpoint on the troubled waterways of Bayelsa State.

Vanguard gathered that the incident occurred along the Ogboinbiri waterways in the Southern Ijaw Local Government Area of the state.

It could not be ascertained which militant group the deceased belonged to but sources told *Vanguard* that they were members of one of the armed group operating in Bayelsa State.

There were conflicting accounts of the incident. One source said the deceased were

killed in a gunfight with the soldiers who tried to stop their boats for routine check at the military checkpoint, while another said the youths were not armed but were attacked for failing to stop at the checkpoint when they were ordered to do so.

Sources said the youths numbering 11 were returning from Ogbotobo community in Delta State to a community in the Southern Ijaw Local Government Area when they ran into some military men guarding an oil company facility along the Ogboinbiri waterways. They were said to have refused to stop at the checkpoint when the soldiers flagged them down, prompting the military men to open fire to which they replied.

They were said to have fallen to the superior fire power of the soldiers. Two managed to escape by jumping into the water.

The Bayelsa State Police Pub-

lic Relations Officer, Mr. Ibokette Iniobong (DSP), could not confirm the incident, saying he only heard there was a confrontation between the military and some militants. He said it was purely a military affair.

Spokesman for the JTF, Major Omale Oshaguba, confirmed the incident, saying nine militants were killed.

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Twenty-eight mobile policemen on a special duty trip from Taraba to Rivers State yesterday lost their lives in a road crash at Aliade on the Makurdi-Enugu Road. Five other persons died in the accident.

The policemen were in a police truck when a Mercedes Benz 911 tuck heading North rammed into the police truck.