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## Nigeria: 26 Confirmed Dead in Rivers Cult Clash

**Vanguard (Lagos)**  
**4 August 2008**

Posted to the web 4 August 2008

 Jimitota Onoyume, Emma Amaize and  
 Dayo Johnson  
 Lagos

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THE army, yesterday, confirmed the death of 20 cultists in an exchange of gunfire between soldiers and the cultists at Nembe waterfront in Rivers State on Friday night, thus bringing the death toll in the cult clash that started on Tuesday to 26.

Besides, gunmen suspected to have been hired by crude oil thieves whose 111 illegal refineries were recently demolished by the Joint Task Force (JTF) in the Niger Delta, Saturday night, attacked soldiers in Bomadi, Delta State in retaliation to the demolition.

And in Ondo State, gunmen claiming to be members of the Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND), yesterday, kidnapped nine chieftains of the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) in Ese-Odo Local Government Area of the state.

Spokesman for the JTF, Lieutenant Col Sagi Musa, told Vanguard yesterday that the army was poised to stop the cult clash from claiming innocent lives. The clash is currently restricted to Abonnema in Akukutoru local government area.

He said it was in line with this spirit that the army had to encounter the cultists Friday night at Nembe waterside, killing about 20 of them. He urged residents and people of the state not to panic over the inter cult clash as security operatives were monitoring the situation.

The clash between two cult groups allegedly led by Soboma George and Farah Dagogo started in Abonnema and is threatening to spread to other parts of the state where they have their strongholds. At Abonnema last Tuesday, about four persons, including a soldier and three members of the cult groups lost their lives.

On Thursday at Harris town, two persons were also killed in the clash.

"As security agencies we are not worried about the clash among the cult groups in the state that started on Tuesday. Let them expend their ammunition on themselves.

This inter-cult war is like a sign of good omen from security point of view so long as it does not affect innocent lives. With what is happening now we are seeing the end of militancy in the state," Lt-Col Musa said, adding: "Security agencies are monitoring the situation to see that it does not claim innocent lives. It is to protect innocent lives that we had to intervene in Abonnema also."

He said the cultists attempted to carry out a surprise attack on men of the JTF stationed at Ogoloma jetty last Wednesday but got what they did not bargain for as two of their boats with the occupants were sunk.

"I remember at Ogoloma jetty they attempted to surprise our troops located to Guard Caw Thorn channel, Marine Base territorial waters etc. When they came close, our gunboats sank two of their speed boats with the occupants.

It is not always we like to say this or that number has been killed. We don't like counting death tolls on the pages of newspapers. This is why we don't record our operational successes on the pages of the papers," he said.

### Crude oil thieves attack JTF in Delta

Meanwhile, gunmen suspected to have been hired by crude oil thieves

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