

2 die in police, *Okada* operators' clash

By Eric Ugbor

ABA—TWO Persons, a policeman and a civilian were killed yesterday,

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when securitymen said to be from the Ndiegoro police station in Aba, Abia State clashed with a group of people in an attempt to arrest motorcycle operators, popularly called *Okada*, operating along the deplorable Aba-Obohia Road, traversing the three councils of Aba South, Ugwuwgbo and Ukwu East.

The incident happened at about 4pm, yesterday, when the *Okada* operators gathered at the Umumba and Bonsack Junctions of Obohia Road, waiting for the rural dwellers, who after trading at Aba township markets, patronize them as their only mode of transportation back to the villages in the three councils.

The activities of the security operatives had been on the increase since last year, when the state government banned the operation of motorcyclists within the state and *Okada* riders since then, were arrested and made to pay a minimum of N10,000 to bail themselves and their bikes on each case.

But authorities within the three councils seemed to have relaxed slightly on the enforcement of the government order, understandably because of the dilapidated and deplorable state of the Aba-Obohia Road from Nkwo Ngwa, which is impassable by vehicles during both dry and rainy seasons.

But the securitymen, hiding under the government ban, have continuously terrorised the *Okada* operators and in most cases, the *Okada* operators run and abandon their motorcycles, which are seized and packed at different police stations in Aba, until owners pay the stipulated sum.

Worried by the incessant security harassments and extortions, the *Okada* operators, supported by people in these rural areas had resolved recently at a meeting to confront the securitymen, possibly to attract the attention of government to their peculiar plight.

But the confrontation turned bloody, yesterday when the two lives were lost, while many others sustained injuries while several others are presently in detention at the Ndiegoro Police station in Aba.

One of the *Okada* riders, who identified himself as Emeka Nwaekeke, who abandoned his bike, told *Vanguard* that "the securitymen

stationed informants around the area and anytime they want money, they come here to arrest us and our bikes and our bikes spend days at the police station until we are able to pay the sum of N10,000."

He said, "they came at about 4pm and arrested *Okada* riders and their motorcycles at Umumba Junction before moving over to Bonsack and it was there that the *Okada* riders confronted them, leading to the death of the two men."

He explained that the security men's informant was matched to death while one of the securitymen, was clubbed to death by the angry *Okada* operators.

Anioma indigenes parley on unity

By Victor Otigbu

ASABA—ANIOMA indigenes of Delta State, have concluded that the Anioma nation needed an apex umbrella body, which will champion the affairs of the Anioma people.

They met recently in Asaba and deliberated on several issues on Anioma affairs.

At the well attended consultative meeting, chaired by Chief Philip Asiodu, it was agreed that further consultations should be undertaken, especially at the grassroots level to ensure unity of purpose.

Amongst the dignitaries that attended the meeting were, Dr. Newton Jibunoh, Mr. F.M. Osifo, Chief F.

Ozoma, Oshiji I.B Ochonogor, Sir Steve Omojafor, Dr. Sylvan Ebigwei, Rear Admiral Andrew Okoja (rtd), Chief Terry Otuya, Brigadier-General Philip Onyekweli (rtd) and Major-General E.O Usiade (rtd). Others were Chief Austin Izagbo, Ms Claire Chizea, Mrs. Tessa Okelue (Adisa), Mr. Pascal Adigwe, Chief Joe Obuseh, Mr. Fidelis Ilijie, Dr. Ify Uraih, Chief Henry Okolo, Mr. Kester Ifeadi, Mr. Tonia Oganah and Ben Egbo.

Amongst the names put forward by members at the meeting, the preferred name of the body, agreed by all is the "Anioma National Council."