

Militants kill four naval operatives, injure three civilians

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Warri

No fewer than four naval personnel were killed and three military men injured on Tuesday when militants attacked two gunboats belonging to the Joint Task Force in Delta State.

Alfred Illogho, the JTF commander (an army general) said the military men were escorting food items in a vessel to Chevron location at Escravos when the militants in some speed boats rounded them up.

Illogho said the remains of the slain naval men had been brought to Warri and deposited in the mortuary, while those that survived with wounds were receiving treatment in Warri.

The commander said those that died include three naval ratings and one officer, just as his men had gone all out to trap the militants.

It was also learnt that some of the Chevron staff on board the boat were also injured.

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Four Naval personnel killed

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The newly appointed Chief of Army Staff Alexander Azazi has declared that the Nigerian Army will remain at oil installations for a long time.

Azazi, a lieutenant-general, spoke at a dinner organised in his honour by the Delta State Government at the governor's office Annex, Warri.

Azazi, who had been on a working tour of all military formations in Delta State since Tuesday, inspected the operations of the army at oil installations protected by six men of the Joint Task Force codenamed (operation restore hope) including a courtesy call on the governor.

"The Nigerian Army shall be a reflection of the Nigerian nation.

In this regard the Nigerian Army would take the task of protecting the nation's strategic resources seriously and would remain in the Niger Delta for a long time, adding that the Nigerian Army will be responsive to the needs of the Nigerian nation at all times, he said."

In his address on the occa-

sion, Governor James Ibori represented by his deputy Benjamin Elue, praised President Olusegun Obasanjo for appointing a Niger-Deltan as the chief of army staff, stating that the appointment reaffirmed of the Presidents willingness to solve the problems of the Niger-Delta region and a representation of the Niger-Delta at the highest level of decision-making in the country.

Meanwhile, the boats and the foodstuff that were seized by the militants have been released to the JTF and the company.

It was gathered that the team of the JTF men that were escorting the food items left Warri at about 6p.m., but were attacked at about 7.30 p.m. along Chanomi creeks, Warri South-West local government area.

The commanding officer of NNS Delta, Warri Naval Base, Mufutau Ajibade, a captain, also confirmed the death and said it was unfortunate for an ugly attack to have occurred when the state government was already celebrating the prevailing peace in the area.