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### Countryman



## JTF combs creeks for militants

### •Villagers flee

DENNIS NAKU, *Yenagoa*

Operatives of the Joint Military Task Force (JTF) codenamed 'Operation Restore Hope' have deployed three gunboats to Nembe creeks, Bayelsa state, in search of militants who attacked an oil platform belonging to Shell, killing two naval ratings and injuring four soldiers.

Daily Champion learnt that the manhunt by the JTF around the Nembe environs also covers adjoining routes to the scene of the incident, where the militants also carted away four naval speed boats, just most community are still in their hideouts, following the manhunt.

Fishing activities, a major pre-occupation of the people of the area, had been abandoned in the meantime as people are still in fears.

Bayelsa State Commanding Officer of the JTF, Lt. Col Nkanah Efik could not be reached for reactions as his phone was switched off when our correspondent called, but his boss and Co-ordinator of Joint Media Campaign Centre, Col. Rabe Abubakar said the security outfit has re-doubled efforts at capturing the militants responsible for the killings.

Col. Abubakar, who stated this in a telephone chat with *Daily Champion*, said the JTF has devised strategies toward recovering the speedboats snatched away by the daring militants, allaying the fears of the general public, even as he assured that the hoodlums would be brought to book. He, however, urged all law-abiding citizens to go about their businesses without fear of molestation.

He claimed that two militants' camps operated by Kitikata and Fara Dagogo, jointly carried out the attack on Monday, adding that "It was however foiled, regrettably and in the process of defending the facility, one naval rating was killed, two sustained minor injuries while four Shell speedboats were carted away by the miscreants."

Col. Abubakar, who described the militants' bombardment as "unprovoked attack on own troops, said "It was a retaliatory attack on the earlier sinking of six militant speedboats which led to their occupants being drowned" near Igbomotoru, the Southern Ijaw local government area of Bayelsa state.

Meanwhile, the people of Nembe, Nembe local government area of Bayelsa State, have been fleeing from the area following the killing of two naval ratings and the abduction of four others by militants.

The *News Agency of Nigeria (NAN)* reports that the people were relocating

from Nembe due to fears about retaliatory attacks by soldiers deployed by the Military Joint Taskforce (JTF) in the Niger Delta to the area to fish out the masterminding.

A military source told NAN that militants often used the Nembe creeks as a launch pad for their attacks.

The source said that the authorities had commenced the deployment of troops to the Nembe creeks to apprehend the three suspected militant leaders responsible for the killing and abduction.

However, the JTF's Spokesman, Col. Rabe Abubakar, advised law-abiding citizens not be afraid because of the development, saying that the soldiers were only deployed to the area to maintain law and order.

Abubakar on Monday confirmed that there were two attacks at Tebidaba flow station, belonging to the Nigeria Agip Oil Company (NAOC), and at the Shell Petroleum Development Company (SPDC) facility in the Nembe creeks.

He, however, said that the attacks were allegedly carried out by three militants, Ogunbus, Kitikata in Bayelsa and Fara Dagogo in Rivers.

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