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Nigeria: JTF Sacks Three Communities in Rivers

Ubooks Gab

18 January 2009

Three communities in Andoni local government area of Rivers State have been deserted after members of the Joint Task Force (JTF) stormed the areas with heavy shelling and bombing.

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Local inhabitants of the affected communities told newsmen that the Joint Task Force came in from the land, sea and air.

The military attacks, according to local people, were targeted at Ajakajak, Uduungama and Okukpor communities where the task-force suspected that Andoni militia men led by one George Adumu have their camps and properties.

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During the raid, local people who spoke under conditions of anonymity told newsmen that many lives were lost, while buildings and properties worth millions of naira were destroyed.

Community people said over 28 persons were feared dead during the air, land and river raids that started on Friday afternoon till about 10 am Saturday.

Giving the account of the attack, a community leader, who gave himself simply as Amon Amon, said over 10 navy gunboats were deployed to Ajakajak, two air fighting planes and over fifteen heavily loaded troopers vans mixed with armoured tanks were positioned at the target areas, even as they were shelling and opening fire at the community.

In the course of the Friday attack which inhabitants said came to them like surprise, it was suspected that George Adumu, leader of the target militia men in the area was badly hit by unsuspecting bullets.

Some of his boys who spoke on conditions of anonymity said they were afraid that Adumu might have died in the process.

They said he was last seen when he was running with blood stained all over his body towards the creeks at the back of Ajakajak community till he fell into the creek in attempt to swim across to safety.

They were speaking in low tunes that till Saturday afternoon, they had not seen their leader.

It was gathered that the effects and impact of the shelling had made people vacate other neighbouring communities of Asarama, Unyeada, Egendem, Ibotirem, Samanga, Dema amongst others.

But, Lt. Col Sagir Musa, while confirming the visit of JTF attack Ajakajak community said the JTF does not have any intention to visit any other community in Andoni.

He said the attack on Ajakajak was selective on houses of those that were suspected militants in Andoni led by Mr George Adumu.

Musa who said the Brigade Commander of JTF, and himself were part of the team that visited Ajakajak on Saturday morning, denied that allegations by local

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people that JTF had harassed and killed innocent persons in the community.

Musa said no lives were lost during the attack targeted at militia men living in the area.

He revealed that the JTF only went there to 'rescue' the place from the activities of militancy, which, according to him, had anchored in Ajakaja.

The JTF spokesman said his men only set the houses belonging to George Adumu and two others who were suspected militants inhabiting the area on fire. "We are law abiding. The fears of those parking and leaving their communities for fears of further visit of the JTF should be allayed. We don't have any such intention to visit any community that does not host militants. What we did at Ajakajak was exactly what we did at Abonnema", said Musa.

Amidst this, inhabitants of the areas have continued to park their belongings and relocating their loved ones and children to other places considered safer for them.

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