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Niger Delta: 'Soldiers didn't kill civilians'

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Misbahu Bashir

Military authorities at the Defence Headquarters, Abuja, yesterday said soldiers did not kill innocent people during their recent assault on militant's hideouts in the Niger Delta region. Rights activists claimed about 150 innocent civilians were killed and women were raped during the military operations, in foreign media.

The Chief of Defence Staff, Air Chief Marshal Oluseyi Petinrin represented by the Chief of Research and Development, Major General Shehu Idris Abdulkadir, said at a press briefing that the operation was perfect and there were no civilian casualties. He said there was no evidence to ascertain that the military Joint Task Force have killed civilians but said the militants could have held some as hostages. "There was no evidence to prove that the JTF massacred civilians. There were no civilian casualties or their graves," he said.

He said the communities where the military operations took place had supported the conduct of the soldiers. But the CDS did not mention the actual number of casualties both on the part of the military and the criminals. Also, the Director of Defence Information, Colonel M.M Yerima said soldiers did not have sex with any woman either by force or with the consent of the victims during the military assault.

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