

NNPC private guards accuse navy of killing two operatives

By **Odita Sunday**

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NNPC

- **They were struck with cutlasses**
- **We don't use cutlass, says naval boss**

Topline Security, a private guard firm engaged by the Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation (NNPC) to secure petroleum pipelines along the stretch of Atlas Cove has accused the Nigerian Navy of killing two of her personnel and abducting two others in the Ilashe area of Ogun State.

Speaking at a press conference at the weekend, coordinator of the firm, Chief Joshua Aminu, disclosed that the murdered personnel, identified as Bello Williams and Oluwasegun Olusanya, were killed in the line of duty.

Narrating how the duo were murdered, Aminu stated that on July 11, 2018 at about 3:30p.m. some personnel of the Nigerian Navy stormed the Ilashe area in two speed boats and opened fire on his men. It was gathered that while the abducted security guards – Abayomi Ojugbele and Benedict Orme – sustained gunshot wounds, the deceased were slaughtered with a machete and buried in a shallow grave.



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According to Aminu, “On the day of the incident, a pure water company had supplied my men with sachet water with a boat. So, they called me and I sent them to go and carry the bags of pure water to their tents. Our patrol team had gone to carry the bags when two speedboats of the Nigerian Navy stormed the area and started shooting sporadically.

“The guards ran for safety and I was immediately called and informed of the invasion. I called the officer in charge of the Navy base covering the area, Aminu Goni to inform him of the incident. I called him five times and he didn’t respond. I called the authorities of the Nigeria National Petroleum Corporation (NNPC) to inform them of what had happened.

“Goni later called me and was telling me that a misunderstanding broke out between his personnel and my men. I told him that was why I was calling him earlier. I requested he go and rescue my men. Goni assured me the situation was under control that he is taking my men to the hospital. He even told me it was a mistake. “Later in the evening when I called him, he said my men were responding to treatment. I requested to come see them but he said they would be discharged the next day that there was no need.

“I called Goni again that evening and asked if the incident was truly a mistake because based on what I had seen, naval personnel shot at the windscreen and one of the bullet even went through the drivers seat. I also told him of how his men had punctured the four tyres of the patrol vehicle. Goni said I shouldn’t worry that he was coming to see me and that we would settle the matter amicably.”

The coordinator stated further that the authorities of the Nigeria Navy never opened up to the fact that they had murdered his personnel until a search conducted by him and some guards disclosed the gruesome murder. “Goni didn’t know that I have also gone out to investigate and found that he actually led the naval team that perpetrated the act.

“The next morning, I went round the area with my men to further examine the level of damage done. It was at this point that I found a tent that had the door open. Out of curiosity, I asked some of the men with me to find out who was in the tent. While searching the tent, we discovered a hole. Upon a close look we found the dead body of

Williams (a.k.a. Awilo) in there. I insisted we search further. We then found a bag and cloths belonging to Olusanya. We also found his dead body, which was dragged to a corner of the tent.”

In his reaction, the FOC, Western Naval Command, Sylvanus Aba, who spoke with The Guardian via a telephone conversation confirmed the incident. He alleged the guards engage in criminal activities, especially pipeline vandalism.



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In his words, “The persons killed were killed with machetes. What will the navy be doing with machetes. The fact is that these so-called guards engage in criminal activities. They claim they have not been paid for 15 months and they are still working. Why? Because they are siphoning fuel. They are committing all forms of atrocities. Two of their men are with us at the navy hospital because we want to use them to give evidence.”

On the agitation by the guards to bear arms, Aba said: “We had a meeting with the management of Topline security in Abuja and it was resolved by all that no arms should be carried by their operatives again. If they are saying they want to carry arms, we are insisting such arms should be licensed by the police.” NNPC spokesman, Ndu Ughamadu, told The Guardian that he was not aware of the killing of pipeline security operatives. Ughamadu, who spoke in a telephone interview simply said: “I am not aware of what you are talking about”.

When The Guardian called the spokesman of Petroleum Product Marketing Company (PPMC), Paul Osu, he said: “If you had done your findings, you should have known that PPMC do not have business with pipelines. We are not NNPC.”

“ I called Goni to inform him of what I had seen. At this point I had to put it straight to him that based on my findings, that personnel of the Nigerian Navy had killed two of my men. He denied it saying my men were with him in the hospital. I told him I have seen their dead bodies. He said that wasn’t possible saying, he would come see things for himself.

“ I also called the Flag Officer Commanding (FOC) in charge of the Western Naval Command, Lagos Sylvanus Aba telling him what had happened and that the perpetrator had promised a comeback. I reminded him of the agreement the Nigerian Navy had made to protect us while we discharge our duties.

“ To confirm my report, Aba sent some of his officers to come see things for themselves. When they came, walked round the scene they then concluded the boys would have been involved in pipeline vandalism and met their waterloo in the act.

“This narrative angered my men so I instantly called the police attention to the murder. The police came pulled out the dead bodies and it was discovered that they were slaughtered with machetes. They both had machete wounds all over them, “ he said.

Making a case for his personnel, Aminu decried the act by the Naval operatives saying it has become obvious that the lives of his personnel are no longer safe. He maintained that their safety especially with the Nigeria Navy that had promised to protect them can no longer be guaranteed.

He said, “ At this point, it is obvious the navy has no good intentions for us. They cannot protect us, instead they are fighting us. So we have decided to stop working. We have communicated to NNPC and they are yet to get back to us.



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“To confirm the fact that the navy know what they are doing, they have chosen not to allow us see our men in their hospital. Goni claimed the FOC said we shouldn’t come to see our men in the hospital. Let me also remind you that early this year, they had also abducted four of our men (Aree Ibrahim, Olayinka David, Idowu Oni and Abayomi Williams) who are still with them in Abuja.”

The coordinator stated frankly that if personnel from the security firm would have to return to their duty posts, then they must be allowed to carry light arms to protect themselves from the unknown.

“ If we must go back and continue our job of protecting pipelines, then we must be allowed to protect ourselves by carrying light arms. Other security agencies like the police have been very supportive but the Navy have made it clear they are not happy with what we are doing. We do not have any ulterior motive, we are only concerned and doing our best to protect our national interest by safeguarding Petroleum pipelines, “ he pointed out.

