

## News

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## Navy kills 12 pirates in Bayelsa

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CENTRAL Naval Command of the Nigerian Navy in Bayelsa State disclosed on Monday that naval ratings killed 12 suspected pirates over the weekend while rescuing an oil vessel - MT NOTRE - along the Forcados River in Delta State. Daily Independent gathered that MT NOTRE, laden with over 17,000 metric tonnes of petroleum motor spirit (PMS), was attacked by the pirates in the Gulf of Guinea last Thursday and then sailed to Forcados River.

Flag Officer Command-

ing (FOC) Western Naval Command, LE Ibas, a Rear Admiral, was said to have deployed NNS ANDONI and NNS IKOT ABASI to engage the bandits after receiving signals.

Six gunboats were also deployed from Warri to join forces with the ratings at Forward Operation Base (FORMOSSO) at Egwoama, Brass Local Government area of the state to reinforce the rescue operation.

Confirming the killing of the suspected pirates to reporters in Yenagoa, FOC, Central Naval Command, Sidi-Ali Usman, a Rear Admiral, said "8

NN vessels were used in pursuit of the hijacked MT NORTE with 16 suspected pirates on board", forcing it back to Nigerian waters.

"An agreed drop point was reached but the suspected militants refused to disembark as earlier agreed. They were obviously playing for time and darkness to set in", said Usman.

He added: "They finally agreed to disembark from MT NORTE at 2045hrs on August 17, 2013 on condition that only one NN vessel would remain in the vicinity of the MT NORTE.

"A total of 16 militants disembarked from the MT

NORTE instead of 20 that were earlier claimed to be on board. The captain also confirmed that no other militant was left on board and no crew member from MT NORTE was taken hostage.

"After disembarking from the ship, the hijackers made a fast move towards the coastline. Accordingly, NNS Badagry immediately engaged the boat in hot pursuit. Efforts to get the hijackers to stop and surrender proved abortive, as they engaged NNS Badagry in a gun battle.

"The gun battle lasted for about 30 minutes after which they were overpow-

ered by the NN gunboat. On taking over the speedboat, four of the militants were alive and unhurt while the rest of the pirates were killed in the crossfire.

"The four survivors, their belongings and three AK 47 rifles were recovered and brought on board NNS Badagry base," the naval chief said.

Usman said the survivors have been detained at the NNS Delta and they have been making useful confession to the Navy.

He said the bodies of the dead pirates could not be recovered as their boat sank because of the damage done to it.

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