

12 militants killed as soldiers storm flow station

TWELVE militants were killed yesterday as soldiers stormed the Agip (NAOC) flow station in Ogboinbiri, Southern Ijaw Local Government Area of Bayelsa State. Five others were captured alive by men of the Joint Task Forces (JTF).

The militants had occupied the flow station for four days, holding hostage some civilian workers and soldiers. Shortly after the news of the hostage-taking got to the JTF, the task force gave the suspected militants 24 hours to release all hostages and quit the flow station, or face severe consequences.

Since then, it was learnt, military gunboats numbering about eight had berthed at Oporoma, headquarters of the local government awaiting a directive from the authorities.

Sources disclosed that military authorities were eager to

From Isaac Ombe,
Yenagoa

launch an attack immediately but the state government urged them to take it easy, believing that dialogue would do the magic. The soldiers eventually bombarded

the flow station to rescue some of the workers. It was not, however, clear whether soldiers were also rescued as the JTF authorities declined comments on the fate of their men guarding the facility.

"We launched a dawn at-

tack, took over the flow station intact and rescued some hostages," Brig-Gen. Lawrence Ngubane was quoted as saying, "the militants' sustained casualties, about 12 of them".

But a military source hinted

that the militants also ensured that they gave a tough fight as some soldiers were also killed in the battle that lasted for hours.

Major Omale Ochagwu-uba, the JTF Public Relations Officer (PRO) who confirmed

that 12 militants were killed, also disclosed that five of them were captured alive during the operation-code named

"Operation Ogboinbiri". He too did not disclose the number of casualties on the side of the JTF.

Martins not in attacked car, say Lagos police

By Jude Isiguzo

THE Lagos State Police Command has denied claims by Nigerian International and Newcastle United striker, Obafemi Martins that he was attacked on Tuesday by masked gunmen.

In an interview with *The Nation* yesterday, the command's spokesman, Mr Olubode Ojajuni, a Superintendent of Police (SP), said there was no truth in Martins' claim.

According to him, Martins was not inside the ML500

Mercedes Benz four-wheel drive, marked BD900 BDG, when it was attacked.

Ojajuni said the driver of the jeep Femi Olapade and another person were those inside the car during the attack.

Ojajuni said Olapade called the police around 3.30a.m. that he was in a hospital.

When the police tried to find out what the matter was, the Police Public Relations Officer (PPRO) said Olapade

told them that he was attacked by some gunmen when he went in search of fuel in Ajah.

Olapade, Ojajuni said told the police that when he came out of the petrol station, a vehicle hit him from behind when he came down to confront the occupants, they brought out a gun and started shooting," the police said.

Ojajuni said the police recovered the car around Alesh Hotel in Ajah and took it to the police station.

He explained that around 7a.m., on Wednesday, the Divisional Police Officer (DPO) in Ajah visited Obafemi's home, where he met with his mum. Martins mum, he said, told the DPO that the soccer star was asleep.

The DPO, it was gathered, dropped his telephone number with Martins' mum.

Ojajuni noted that around 10a.m., Martins called to thank the DPO for his assistance. The soccer star, he said, promised to visit the DPO

when he (Martins) comes back from abroad.

The PPRO maintained that "the whole attack thing is a total lie. He was never attacked. We do not know the motive behind the false information. What was the driver doing in a place where there is no filling station. Martins was not attacked."

The Nigerian International claimed that he was at a petrol station near his Lagos apartment on Monday night when he was attacked.