

Many feared dead, buildings set on fire as JTF raid communities

MANY people were feared dead when the men of military Joint Task Force (JTF) raided three communities in Andoni Local Government area of Rivers state at the weekend.

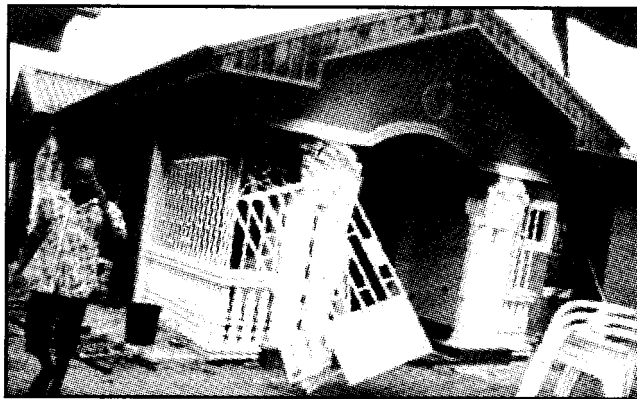
As a result of the heavy presence of the soldiers, the three affected communities of Ajakaja, Uduungama and Okukpor have been deserted by the locals there who were scared of hearing the intermittent booms of shelling and bombing which lasted from Friday till at about 10 am on Saturday.

The locals reportedly said that the men of JTF surprisingly stormed the area from the land, sea and air.

They also said that the military attack was targeted at the three communities where they suspected that Andoni militia men led by one George Adumu have their camps.

During the raid, the people claimed that about 28 lives were lost, while buildings and property worth millions of naira were destroyed.

A community leader who



•One of the houses raided by JTF

**From Clarice Azuatalam,
Port Harcourt**

identified himself as Amon Amon said about 10 navy gunboats were deployed to Ajakajak, two air fighting plans and about 15 heavily loaded trooper vans mixed with armoured tanks were positioned at the target areas, even as they were shelling and opening fire at the community.

It was also feared that in the course of the Friday attack, George Adumu, suspected

leader of the targeted militia men in the area sustained bullet injuries which must have led to his death.

As a result of the sounds of gunshots, it also gathered that people from the neighbouring communities of Asarama, Unyeada, Egendem, Ibotirem, Samanga, Derna amongst others have fled their homes.

But, Lt. Col Sagir Musa, Spokesman of JTF while confirming the attack on Ajakajak community said the task force does not have any

intention to visit any other community in Andoni area.

Musa said the attack on Ajakajak was selective on houses of those that were suspected militants in Andoni led by Mr George Adumu adding that the Brigade Commander of JTF, and himself were part of the team that visited Ajakajak on yesterday morning.

He denied the allegations by local people that JTF had harassed and killed innocent persons in the community saying that "no life was lost during the attack targeted at militia men living in the area."

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 packing 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 Abornema" Musa said.