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Pirates, police battle in Bayelsa

Posted by: Mike Odiegwu in News 1 min ago

•Hoodlums feared killed

Some pirates were 'killed' yesterday morning in a gun battle with the police in Bayelsa State.

Five pirates were said to have attacked the policemen attached to an oil rig in Gbarain, Southern Ijaw Local Government Area.

Some of the policemen were said to have sustained minor injuries. The hoodlums lost some of their members; others fled with injuries.

It was gathered that the pirates stormed the rig operated by Lone Star Drilling Company at 2am.

A security source, who pleaded for anonymity, said immediately they got to the area, the pirates opened fire.

He said the pirates erroneously thought that the policemen on duty were sleeping.

"Their main target was to remove the weapons attached to a gunboat used to protect the rig. They wanted to steal the guns in the boat."

The source said the policemen repelled the attack.

"All I can tell you is that some of the pirates must have been hit by the police bullets.

"They fell in the river and it is believed that those who were hit must have fallen into the river. It is expected that their bodies would float after two days.

"The pirates came to remove the weapons, very sophisticated ones, on the gunboat.

"They came with a generator and electric filer which they intended to use to remove the weapons. Unfortunately, they were repelled by the policemen guarding the rig.

"In fact, I was proud of the way the police were able to repel them. I think that will send a signal to others that it is no longer business as usual."

But it was learnt that despite the reported killing of some of the bandits, the hoodlums reinforced and came back at 6am.

The policemen, who were said to have remained vigilant, engaged them in another round of gun duel and forced them out of the area.

Police Commissioner Hilary Opara said the pirates attacked the rig at Gbarain with the intention of cutting the chain used to secure the gunboat to the rig.

He said if they had succeeded, they would have stolen the gunboat and eventually removed the police guns.

The commissioner said the suspected pirates, who came on a speedboat, opened fire first on his men.

Opara, however, could not confirm if any of the pirates died.

He said: "If such happened, in no distant time, their bodies would surely float on the water.

"The pirates came with electric filer and a generator. Their aim was to use the electric filer to sever the chain used for securing the gunboat to the rig.

"Unfortunately, the policemen attached to the rig were there. After serious exchange of fire, the pirates abandoned the rig.

"The pirates again came back around 6 am, probably thinking our men had gone. When they sighted our men, they ran back and some swam in the river to escape."

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