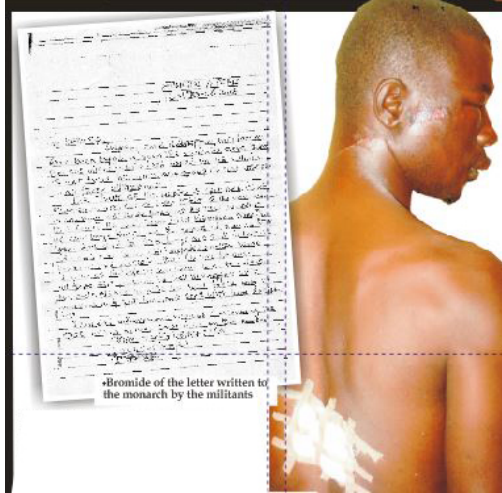




IT'S FIGHT TO THE FINISH!

Posted By: Kunle AKINRINADE on: July 09, 2016 In: Crime Diary No Comments



Militants who claimed responsibility for the previous attack on Totowu, Imoshe, Ishefun, Ishitu, Igando and other coastal communities in Ado Odo/Ota Local Government Area of Ogun state and Alimosho area of Lagos state, have vowed to carry out more strikes until their members in police custody are released.

The attacks, according to highly placed sources, started when the militant boys believed to be pipeline vandals began to use the Totowu River as a decoy to ferry petroleum products from vandalised pipelines around the Ijedodo community near Ikotun, a Lagos suburb, through Ipaja into Lagos metropolis.

The gang was said to have struck a deal with some powerful residents, who profited from the illicit business, and provided safe passage for the boys to transport bagged stolen fuel.

Their relationship was, however, severed after one of the community leaders allegedly betrayed the militant group and instigated the arrest of some members, of the gang.

Findings revealed that a community leader (names withheld), who is one of their godfathers felt cheated by the leader of the militant gang following a transaction involving a huge sum of money. He was said to have allegedly attacked and arrested some members of the gang in retaliation.



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Angered by the development, the leader of the unnamed militant group called 'General' Ateke wrote a letter to Imoshe's monarch asking him to prevail on the person who masterminded the arrest of its members to release the boys or be ready for showdown.

The monarch was said to have hidden the letter from community leaders out of fear until the militant boys made good their threat and unleashed violence attacks on residents.

They struck seven days after the letter, dated June 20, 2016, was forwarded to the monarch killing several residents, while over 500 residents have fled their homes.

A copy of the letter exclusively obtained by our correspondent read in part: "Robbery and kidnapping incidences have been happening (sic) along the riverine area these grivious(sic) offences have been blamed on us which is not true because our group is not involved in all these allegations.

"The truth of the matter is that one Chief Akinrogun also called Baba Isila is the one who is causing all these problems. He is the one who is causing all these problems. He is the one who is causing all these problems."

these problems. As I am writing this letter the man Baba Ishila kidnapped three of our boys since on the month of (sic) March this year 2016 and the three boys are still in his custody and now he has kidnapped another three persons and proclaim that we are the one.

"In view of the above, we want him to release all these six persons he has kidnapped with immediate effect or else we will trace him to anywhere and get him and deal with him decisively..."

A source who spoke in confidence said:" It is a multimillion naira illicit business. Some residents went into shady deals with the militant boys who steal petrol from vandalized pipelines.

"They have been carrying out the illegal business since 2012 until their relationship crashed following allegations of betrayal by one of their collaborators in the community.

In an exclusive interview with our correspondent on the telephone, the spokesman of the group who identified himself simply as Hon said the attacks will be brutal in the days to come unless his men are released by the police.

He said:" We were invited to the community by one Akinrogun and Sato for the purpose of doing 'business'. We had a deal to share the proceeds of the business on a 50-50 basis but Akinrogun and Sato later reneged and instead invited members of the Odua Peoples Congress(OPC) to destroy our camp and arrested three of our members about three months ago.

"We wrote a letter to the Baale of Imoshe village asking him to provide Akinrogun and his accomplice or prepare for showdown and since they have refused to do that, we also declared war on their communities and it will be fight to the finish o my brother. We will continue to attack the communities until our members in police custody are released."

Asked why his men turned their guns on innocent residents instead of the man they were looking for, Hon said:" We have vowed to make innocent residents pay for the sins of those behind the arrest of our members because Akinrogun and Sato brought OPC men and mobile policemen to destroy our camp. They raided our camp in March this year when it was raining to arrest our members and subsequently sent them to prison. That is why we have been attacking those communities and we won't relent until our boys are set free from prison.

"Even you as a reporter cannot take it if you were betrayed by people you trust so much in a business transaction. Although our camp was partially ravaged by policemen and OPC members but we have since regrouped because we have a network of members everywhere in Nigeria. We are not Niger Delta militants but we have our boys all over the country and we have since gathered more men to join the battle against the two men who betrayed us and invited armed policemen and OPC members to arrest our members."

He added: "We attacked Imoshe today (Thursday) but some OPC members confronted us and shot two of our members but that won't deter us at all. If our boys are not released immediately, what is happening in Sagamu and other parts of Ogun State will happen here (Imoshe, Totowu and others). That is why we dey attack them and the residents will pay dearly for the arrest of our members."

It will be recalled that an attack carried out by the militant group on June 27 led to the death of some of the villagers and a mobile police sergeant, Yusuf Hadi Imeko, who was travelling in a boat with others when they were ambushed.

The late policeman, who earlier participated in an operation to flush out the dreaded Boko Haram insurgents in the Northeast, had just been promoted to his next rank a month before he was killed.

It was learnt that no fewer than 20 persons have since been killed by the militants, who are believed to be pipeline vandals operating on Totowu River, which connects the community with Itele, Agbara in Ogun State and Igando and Egan areas of Lagos State.

Not a few residents have also been robbed and molested by the members of the militant group. The community has since been deserted by thousands of residents for fear of being attacked by the militants.

A victim who asked not to be named said:"A lot of people have so far fled this community following the constant mindless killings, kidnappings and robberies carried out by the pipeline vandals. As I speak, we now live in palpable fear due to the raids by the terror gang which has led to the exodus of many people from this place.

"I am a civil servant and I work in one of the council development areas of Lagos State. At the close of work a few weeks ago, I boarded a boat from Ishitu Egan jetty to Totowu and when we got to the middle of the river, these militant boys waylaid our boat and robbed us of all we had on us.

"The boys identified themselves as Niger Delta militants and dispossessed me of two of my phones, a loaf of bread and a folder and robbed other passengers of their valuables, including the sum of N250.000 belonging to a female passenger.



...robbed some passengers...

“There was a time they even robbed some passengers in a boat and asked some female passengers to remove their clothes and fondle their breasts. We are no longer safe in this community and we are asking security agencies to come to our aid because as at now there are no boats to transport people on the waterways; everywhere has been deserted because of these attacks.”

A traditional title holder and Maiyegun of Totowu, Chief Olumide Ajose, however, put the figure of fearful residents who have bolted at well over 5,000.

He said:“ The population of the community is about 6,000 but only 50 residents are left in Totowu now. Others have fled for their dear lives, while those who are still in the community dare not come out.

Chief Ajose also confirmed the existence of the letter, saying:“ The insecurity problem has worsened since the killing of the mobile policeman by the militant boys a few days ago because the boys also attacked a boat and killed its 18 passengers, including the operators. Members of the gang have laid a siege to our community and residents can no longer move out or come into Totowu.

“We have also just recently discovered a letter written by the leader of the militant gangs to the Baale of this community since Monday June 20 but the monarch did not tell us about the existence of the letter, wherein the militant group asked that a man called Akinrogun or Baba Isila, who allegedly betrayed them be provided.”

He explained further that the man accused of betrayal by the Ijaw militants “is not an indigene of Totowu. He is from Ishefun, a neighbouring community, and lives in Ayobo area of Alimosho. We can no longer go out and those who dared to go out a few days ago were brutalised by the militant boys. When I summoned courage and visited the bank of the river with some residents this morning, we discovered the lifeless body of a man and handed the body to policemen.



“Totowu is desolate because of mass exodus of residents. Some policemen who were drafted to the community last Thursday spent barely 30 minutes and left. We are urging Ogun State government and Federal Government to immediately rescue us from the grip of the marauding youths.

“The militants came to this village in 2012, and when I led others to prevent them from using this community to operate their unlawful business, I was brutalised and stabbed to the point of death.”

Contacted, the Baale of Totowu, Chief Mosudi Bamgbose, however, denied that the letter was addressed to him. He explained that the letter was addressed to the Baale of Imoshe, a neighbouring village and that the letter has been forwarded to the relevant security agencies, including the police.

He said:“Yes, there was a letter written by the militant group but it was addressed to the Baale of Imoshe, a neighbouring community. The letter was not addressed to me at all. I only have a photocopy of the letter and relevant security agencies have been given copies of the letter from the militant boys.

“Today (Thursday), about 10 members of the gang stormed Imoshe with the intention of attacking residents but they were chased out by vigilant youths. They are not more than 19 years old and have been terrorising not only Totowu but Ishefun, Ishuti and Imoshe among others. We are living in fear and our lives are not safe because of the marauders who have been killing our people, including policemen lately. Please help us tell both Ogun and Lagos state governments to come to our aid.”

He added: “The man (Chief Akinrogun) the militant boys are accusing of kidnapping did not abduct anyone. He only caused the arrest of some members of the gang during a raid and handed them to men of the State Anti-Robbery Squad (SARS), hence, he was singled out for reproach and attack by the heartless boys. Chief Akinrogun explained this in the presence of a senior police officer who visited one of the communities recently.”

Ogun police spokesman, Mr. Muiyiwa Adejobi, a Superintendent of Police (SP) was not available for comments at press time.

However, his Lagos counterpart, Dolapo Badmos, a Superintendent (SP), said: “Two of the hoodlums were arrested and ammunition recovered. Presently, the command has deployed adequate security personnel and equipment to the area to forestall reoccurrence. We are working on the clue we have so far to unravel the case.

“The command is also imploring members of the public to promptly alert the police of any strange movement or occurrence within their community.”

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