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Sea pirates kill four marine policemen

Posted By: Precious Dikewoha, Port Harcourt and Mike Odiegwu, Yenagoa on: September 07, 2016 In: News No Comments

Sea pirates have killed four policemen after hijacking their gunboat on routine patrol of the Abonnema waterways.

The bodies of the policemen have been recovered.

The Nation gathered that the gunboat was attacked shortly after departing Abonnema wharf jetty in Akuku-Toru Local Government Area of Rivers State.

A source disclosed that the hijacked gunboat left the jetty in company of another gunboat, which has since returned from the patrol.

According to the security source, preliminary investigation indicated that the gunboat was attacked by militants.

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The source said a body was found on Monday, adding that it was discovered that the victim had gunshot wounds, which further confirmed the involvement of militants.

The remaining bodies were recovered yesterday. The gunboat is yet to be found.

The State Police Public Relations Officer (PPRO), Omoni Nnamdi, a Deputy Superintendent of Police (DSP), could not be reached for comments.

Three bodies of the soldiers who drowned in Bayelsa have been recovered by a combined rescue team of troops and community folks.

Despite high tide and disturbing current, the rescuers were said to have retrieved two bodies on Monday and one on Tuesday morning.

The body recovered on Tuesday was said to have floated far away from the scene of the incident. The team was said to be searching for the fourth body.

Four soldiers were reported drowned. Eight others were rescued after their gunboat capsized on Brass waterways.

The operation, which is being coordinated by the 2 Brigade, Port Harcourt, the Rivers State capital, was designed by the military to equip the amphibious and internal security operations in the riverine areas against the activities of militants.

Niger Delta communities and their leaders have been warned against harbouring militants and criminals.

The Ijaw Youths Council (IYC) Worldwide, the umbrella body of Ijaw Youths which issued the warning, also sympathised with the military over the drowning of four soldiers undertaking "Operation Crocodile Smile" in Brass waters, Brass Local Government Area, Bayelsa State.

Speaking in Yenagoa, IYC President Mr. Udengs Eradiri said they were in support of military operations aimed at fishing out militants and criminals from the creeks.

Eradiri warned communities and their leaders to assist the authorities in identifying criminals.

He said criminals were acting contrary to the Ijaw struggle, adding that those who rape, kidnap, kill, rob and maim innocent civilians and soldiers deserved no place in communities.

He said: "Our community women are raped and all kinds of crimes including kidnapping, go on in the

creeks. So, if the military is going in to clean up those criminal elements, then they will have our support.

“We use this opportunity to call on communities to stop harbouring criminal elements. There is no community which will say they don’t know these boys. These are boys who steal, rape innocent people and they come from communities. This is a call for the community.

“If you are a leader in the community and you want to protect your people, then every effort must be made to support the authorities to fish out criminal elements. These people are not doing any good to us.

“They are rather spoiling genuine agitations for Ijaw people. You see them killing innocent soldiers. You see them kidnapping, harassing and maiming innocent people. They do all manner of things that are alien to the Ijaw agitation. The military will have our full support if they have come to fish out criminal elements.”

Eradiri advised the military to be prepared for an operation like the “Crocodile Smile” before delving into the creeks to avoid a repeat of the incident that led to death of the soldiers.

He said: “We sympathise with the military and the families of the soldiers that lost their lives in the ‘Operation Crocodile Smile’. It is very unfortunate. But it further underscores the fact that the military needs to be properly prepared for an operation like this.

“We don’t see anything wrong for military mobilising for operations, but we would have had more peace if the government channels the resources they are using to undertake such operations to construction and economic activities in the region.”

The IYC boss urged the government to immediately approve the Brass Fertilizer Project as a way of stimulating the economy of the region and tackling restiveness.

He said the project would absorb over 12,000 workforce and take youths out of the creeks.

Bayelsa State Chairman of the National Maritime Union Mr. Lloyd Sese, claimed that the boat accident was caused by poor logistics and the use of low capacity engine boats in the military operation.

He said the preliminary investigations by the union revealed that the accident would have been avoided if adequate logistics and high engine capacity boats had been provided.

He said: “We call on the military authorities to consult the Maritime Union for logistics and transport during such movements. While we commiserate with them on the loss of their men, we call on them to consult those involved in the day-to-day commercial activities along the creeks and the waterways.”

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