

Police kill notorious 'pirate', rescue kidnapped family

From Mike Odiegwu, Port

RIVERS State has been thrown into jubilation following the killing of an alleged notorious pirate, John Togo the Second, said to have terrorised major waterways in the state.

The Commissioner of Police, CP Olatunji Disu, who confirmed the development in Port Harcourt, described the late Togo as the Anchor Head of Iceland Confraternity.

He said Togo orchestrated a reign of terror, caused fear, devastation and engaged in high profile kidnapping, arms trafficking and illegal oil bunkering.

Disu said John Togo was a significant threat to coastal communities in Rivers State, particularly along Bonny-Port Harcourt, Okrika, and Andoni waterways.

He operated illegal oil bunkering camps, engaged in arms trafficking, and was responsible for numerous heinous acts such as ambushes, murders, and robberies, the police chief said.

He said: "John Togo's criminal career began in the Borikiri area of Port Harcourt, where he initially engaged in cult-related ac-

tivities. Gradually, he graduated from petty crimes and evolved into a full-fledged kidnapper and sea pirate, assembling a gang of ruthless criminals along the way.

"Adopting the alias of ex-militant John Togo, who had been killed in July 2011, he and his gang gained notoriety in 2021 due to their involvement in a series of sea piracy and kidnappings, which ignited the #EndSea-Piracy protests and campaigns that reverberated throughout Bonny Island in January 2021".

He recalled that one of the most brazen acts committed by John Togo was the ambush and subsequent murder of four members of a sister security agency on November 1, 2023 along the Bakana River in Degema Local Government Area.

Disu said: "Notably, he was planning to ambush security personnel patrolling the Bille-Degema-Okrika waterways with speedboats to seize their weapons before he was neutralized.

"Throughout his criminal career, John Togo engaged in numerous shootouts with

the Marine Police, Nigerian Army, and NSCDC, displaying his utter disregard for law enforcement and public safety.

"In one such encounter on the 17th of July 2023, Togo engaged security forces in a shootout, compelling them to abandon their gunboat. Despite previous encounters with security forces, John Togo continued to elude capture.

"He targeted commercial boats, mercilessly killed drivers and threw passengers into the sea as he stole the vessels."

On the intelligence that led to his killing, Disu said: "The turning point came when John Togo abducted Precious George, the Youth Leader of Ibifara Polo, on the 30th of May 2023. After holding George captive for twelve days and receiving a ransom of N2.5 million, Togo's face was unveiled, setting the police on his trail.

"Acting on credible intelligence, the Rivers State Police Command, in collaboration with the C4i intelligence unit and the Borikiri Police Division, launched an operation to apprehend Togo and his gang.