

Thursday, July 09, 2009 (NIGERIA)




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Gunmen Kill Five in Rumuekpe Community

... Youth leader blames JTF, Oil Firms for the attack

By Uko Sam

Five persons were reportedly shot dead at Rumuekpe community in Emohua local government area of Rivers State by unidentified gunmen. Three others were also seriously injured and are presently receiving treatment in an undisclosed hospital in a dawn raid. The attacks, it was learnt, came unexpectedly despite the presence of the Joint Military Task Force {JTF} in the area. Names of those killed were identified as Onyebuchi Odokwu, Nddi Odum, Felix Kpomasichi Awute, Kingdom Egbua and Michael Ozioma while Anyeale Alegu, Vanurechi Wagwanum and Consulation Obihele were injured in the attacks and are said to be receiving treatment at undisclosed clinics.

The youth president of Rumuekpe clan, Prince Augustine Chim expressed shock at the unprovoked attacks describing it as handiwork of the oil multinationals operating in the area namely SPDC, AGIP, ELF and NDPR as well as their contractors. He accused the oil companies and their contractors for launching the latest attacks to give the impression that there is no peace when the community has almost achieved total peace. Investigations by Niger Delta STANDARD correspondent revealed that the youth leaders, Elders, women leaders in collaboration with Non-governmental organizations within and outside the state have successfully brokered peace in the war ravaged community amongst the warring factions.

Our checks further reveal that the warring factions were made to swear the traditional vows that they would not harm each other anywhere. After series of meetings, Saturday 4 July, 2009 was fixed for the grand finale of the peace process but due to unforeseen circumstances, the meeting was put off. The attackers, apparently thinking that the meeting would hold decided to launch the attacks to prevent peace from coming to the community. In a chat with reporters in Port Harcourt, Prince Augustine Chim said "after enormous efforts and resources by the youth leaders, elders, chiefs and women leaders in the community, peace was eventually achieved.

This was widely celebrated by the community in 22nd June and was widely reported in the media". Speaking further, the youth president blamed the attack on contractors of the multinational oil companies operating in the area, adding that the major sponsor of the armed youths in the clan was an official of the Rivers State Ministry of Lands and Housing, Survey Department. The youth leader wants relevant stakeholders to note that these were the brains behind the latest killings in the community. He therefore warned the oil companies to completely blacklist these contractors by refusing to give them new contracts as well as terminate existing contracts with them. "For peace to reign, these contractors must be blacklisted in order to freeze out their source of economic power which they use to cause continuous unrest in the clan.", he told newsmen.

He, however, expressed his readiness to continue in the path of peace. "I will continue to follow the path of peace. I've asked my people to remain calm so that the government can handle the issue. They thought the attacks would stop me from continuing with the peace campaigns. Let it be known that Rumuekpe indigenes anywhere would not allow these outcasts to destroy our land, I stand for peace, let nobody be afraid", he assured. Meanwhile, unconfirmed reports showed that the JTF have moved into the community with armored Personnel carriers and weapons and have destroyed all remaining property of the people. We could not confirm who authorized the deployment. Reacting to this, the youth leader Prince Chim said the JTF should be withdrawn without delay and that the government should stop involvement of the JTF in purely intracommunity affair.

He said rather than give the community security, the JTF were destroying the little property left for the community wondering if they really want peace. Reacting, an Ikwerre socio-cultural group, the Ikwerre Bu Otu Peace Movement who facilitated the peace process expressed displeasure with the latest development. The president of the group Comr. Igwe Prince Ihunwo told newsmen that he was disappointed by the development. According to him, the multinational companies should stop patronizing those indicted and vowed that he would continue the peace process and ensure that total peace returns to Rumuekpe Clan.

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