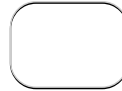


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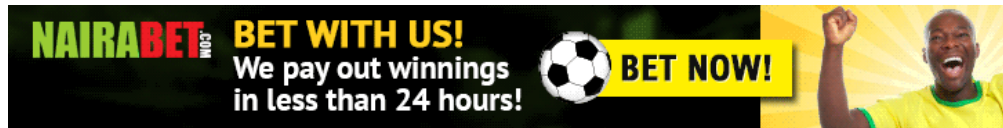
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ARMY LAUNCHES ATTACK ON MILITANTS

AUGUST 28, 2016 / : CHRIS AGBAMBU AND EBENEZER ADUROKIYA



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•Kills 5, injures many, arrests 23 •It is one Nigeria or nothing —Olu of Warri

The 133 Special Forces Battalion of the Nigerian Army troops has carried out a precursor operation, code-named Crocodile Smile, to get rid of all forms of criminal activities in the Niger Delta region.

In the course of the operation, five militants were killed, while many others were injured. Twenty-three suspects were also arrested.

The operation, which was conducted on Friday, was carried out by the special forces at the militants camps, a statement by the army said.

Items recovered from the camps included two AK-47 rifles, 11 pump action guns, a locally-made pistol, 292 cartridges of live ammunition, 199 rounds of AK-47 rifle ammunition, four generators, a camp gas cooker and a boat left by the fleeing criminals.

The Chief of Army Staff, Lieutenant-General Tukur Buratai, has confirmed the killing and the recovery of arms.

Buratai made the confirmation in Sapele, Delta State on Saturday.

He said that some suspects were arrested following a raid of the militants' camp on Friday evening by the Battalion.

The suspected militants had attempted to interfere with the training conducted for formations and units in the Niger Delta.

"As you move into the creeks to conduct the exercise, I urge you to be professional in your conduct and clear any obstacle interfering with your job.

Lt. Gen. Tukur Buratai, however, urged troops to ensure they catch militants alive in order to make them face the law.

Buratai gave the advice during his visit to over 500 troops stationed at the military formation.

He charged the troops to defend the country with every sense of duty.

"You are here to defend your father land. I urge you to be of good conduct, courageous, patriotic and highly professional in your chosen career," he admonished.

The army boss said that during a breakdown of law and order in the course of their engagement, they should apply minimum and maximum forces where applicable.

"Ensure that you should first try not to inflict bodily harm on militants. Try to take them alive so that they can have the opportunity to face the law.

"This you must do, even though you may apply force for your self defence," he noted.

The Chief of Army Staff, after flagging off the exercise in Sapele, paid a courtesy visit to the Olu of Warri, Ogiame Ikenwoli 1, in his palace to reassure him and the people that the army meant well during the operation.

The army boss appealed to the people not to exercise fears as the troops were in the creeks to secure and provide safety while going about its training exercise.

The Olu of Warri, in his response, said that Nigeria remained indissoluble, and that his subjects and all Deltans believe in one Nigeria.

It will be recalled that in its logistics build-up to the commencement of the exercise, the military had embarked on a free medical outreach to Sapele communities in Delta State.

Despite reassurance from Governor Ifeanyi Okowa and the Chief of Army Staff on the safety of lives and property, residents of Gbaramatu Kingdom have expressed their displeasure over the deployment of military hardwares in recent times, describing it as a ploy to intimidate the people of the area.

Acting secretary of Gbaramatu Traditional Council, Chief Godspower Gbenekama, said Ijaws were being targeted for annihilation.

"Despite the plea of leaders of the Niger Delta to the military high command to shelve the idea of militarisation of the Niger Delta, the army is still going ahead to carry out their purported military drill exercise in the region.

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