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Fears of vessels withdrawal from Nigeria 's waters

Monday, 06 April 2009 00:00

- As Pirates killed 10 captains in two years

No fewer than 10 captains were killed by sea robbers in the past two years . The President of Merchant Navy Officers and Water Transport Senior... Staff Association, Captain Thomas Kemewerigha said that some companies had started withdrawing their vessels from Nigerian waters.

Echoing him, the Nigerian Trawler Owners Association (NITOA) as well as some master mariners explained that it has become imperative for trawlers to be withdrawn from Nigerian waters.

The first vice president of NITOA, Mrs Margret Orakwusi explained that prior to the attack on General Danjuma's trawler; there had been at least four attacks.

She hinted that the fishing trawlers were vandalized, while valuable equipment was carted away by the robbers.

The latest in the attacks on fishing trawlers took place about four weeks ago when sea robbers attacked a fishing trawler FT Star 1, which belongs to former Minister of Defence, General Theophilus Danjuma on Benin River .

The Captain of the vessel, Pius Italume lost his live in that process while the vessel's crews were wounded seriously.

Orakwuashi added that the association had been seeking government support for security but none had been provided.

Kemewerigha also explained that fishing companies have started withdrawing from the country because of the renewed attack on their vessels."

He said that members had suffered mostly in the hands of the dare devil sea robbers.

He noted that the attack on F.T Star1 and the killing of the ship's captain, after several of such attacks in the last couple of weeks were responsible for the decision of the shipping companies.

Kemewerigha stressed that after attacks on about four vessels earlier this year, fish trawler operators shifted harvesting outside Nigerian waters, but lamented that the vessels were also being attacked on their way back into the country.

According to him, at least 10 Captains were killed in recent times, even as he added that "here is an industry that is not only employing Nigerians, but it is equally earning foreign exchange for this great nation, yet, the cost of sailing a vessel for 45 days is very high because of the high price of diesel.

"To sail a vessel for 45 days would cost you about N9 million. What would you get from the sea and sell to get your money back? You pay the crew, you feed them, and you also buy water? At the end of the day, pirates will attack you, loot your cargo and your electronics and kill your crew", he lamented.

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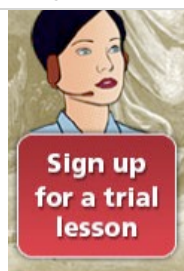
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