



# Militants kill four naval officials, injure three soldiers

**Sola Adebayo, Warri**

**M**ILITANTS suspected to be Ijaw on Wednesday night killed four naval personnel and injured three soldiers in the creeks of Delta State.

The Commander of the Joint Task Force in the Niger Delta, Operation Restore Hope, Brig.-Gen. Alfred Ilogho, who confirmed the casualty figure on Thursday, simply identified the deceased as a naval commander and three ratings.

A military team escorting the supply convoy of the American oil giant, Chevron Nigeria Limited, from Warri was attacked at Chanomi creeks, Warri South-West local government Area of Delta State.

The militants reportedly disarmed the military personnel before diverting 11 vessels in the convoy, including two gun boats of the JTF, to their den in Okerenkoko.

Investigation by our correspondent on Thursday, however, revealed that the militants fired dynamites into the In-shore Patrol Craft used by the deceased naval personnel.

But it was gathered that they could not gain access to the IPC of the soldiers because it was bullet proof. However, it was riddled with bullets.

Our correspondent who visited *NNS Delta*, Warri Naval Base, where the ICPs were stationed after their release by the militants on Thursday, counted over 100 bullet spots on the ICP.

The remains of the fallen naval personnel were brought to Warri through the jetty of the *NNS Delta* on Thursday.

The Commanding Officer of the base, Navy Capt. Mufutau Ajibade, who was devastated by the incident, received the bodies in company with his subordinates.

The remains were later deposited in the morgue of the CNL, while the injured soldiers were admitted to the hospital of the American oil firm.

Ilogho, in a telephone interview with our correspondent, said he could not ascertain the circumstance which led to the encounter between his troops and the militants.

Our correspondent, however, learnt that Ilogho negotiated a truce with the leader of the militants on Thursday.

All the rifles confiscated by the militants and vessels, including the two gun boats, were released at 3 am on Thursday.

Meanwhile, the General Manager, Government and Public Affairs of the CNL, Mr. Ferni Odumabo, confirmed that all the five vessels belonging to the company's supply contractors had been freed and their contents intact.

Odumabo, in a telephone interview with our correspondent on Thursday, said the vessels

were returned to the company's operational base in Warri. Similarly, he said the contractors' personnel on board the vessels were released unhurt.

Meanwhile, the Nigerian Navy, on Thursday, described Commander Francis Niyi Kolawale, who was killed by the militants on June 7 as a "courageous and gallant soldier."

A statement by the Director of Naval Information, Abuja, Capt. Obiora Medani, said Kolawale was killed in active service by restive militants of the Niger Delta at Cawthorne Channel River, Port Harcourt, Rivers State.

The naval spokesman said the attack also resulted in the death of four other ratings and two civilians.

## US can't secure Gulf of Guinea alone -Sekibo

**Ihuoma Chiedozie, Abuja**

**T**HE Minister of Transport, Dr. Abiye Sekibo, on Thursday said the United States Government could not neglect Nigeria in its efforts to ensure security in the Gulf of Guinea.

Sekibo said this at a meeting in Abuja with members of the United States and Nigeria Technical Committee on Maritime Security and Safety in the Gulf of Guinea Region.

He added that the security collaboration was of vital importance to the country.

The minister said, "When you are talking of security in the Gulf of Guinea, it is practically impossible to remove Nigeria from the equation."

He added that the Federal Government was "glad that you have made that a major plank in the collaboration."

"Bearing in mind the potential in the Gulf of Guinea, the collaboration with the United

States Government is of vital importance to us."

Leader of the US team in the technical committee and Deputy Director, Knowledge Management in the US Naval Forces Europe, US Sixth Fleet Fleet, Commander Nancy Norton, said the United States Government would not take unilateral decisions in maintaining security in the Gulf of Guinea.

"We need to partner with the Nigerian Government," Norton said.

Meanwhile, President Olusegun Obasanjo on Thursday called on donors who made pledges during the fund raising for the National Mosque to redeem their promises.

Obasanjo made this call while inaugurating the Board of Trustees of the National Mosque, Abuja, at the State House in Abuja.