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...JTF sacks militants from three communities in Rivers

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Troops from the Joint Task Force on the Niger Delta on Saturday stormed three communities in Andoni Local Government Area of Rivers State and sacked some notorious militants from the area.

The Spokesman of the task force, Lt. Col. Sagir Musa, who spoke to Sunday Punch, denied that the communities were sacked during the operation.

However, a local source said that Ajakajak/Orgbudia and Okukpor communities were targets of heavy shelling by troops which comprised artillery, air and water assault.

He said the troops invaded the communities to uproot a notorious militant leader, George Adumu and his men, who were said to have operated camps in the area.

During the raid, the source said that many lives were lost, while buildings and properties worth millions of naira were destroyed.

He said the troops firing from land, air and the river, bombarded the communities since Friday afternoon till 10am on Saturday.

During the sustained fire, he said several persons might have been cut down by stray bullets while houses of innocent persons were also torched.

He said that over 10 navy gunboats, two attack helicopters and over 15 van-loads of soldiers, supported by armoured personnel carriers stormed Ajakajak.

Another source from the community said it was being feared that Adumu might have been killed during the attack which he said took the entire community by surprise.

Besides, he said several members of the Adumu's group might have also been killed while those, who survived had fled to other parts of Andoni for refuge.

He said, "Adumu was last seen running with blood all over his body towards the creeks at the back of Ajakajak community. He might have attempted to swim across to safety but nobody can tell whether he was able to make it."

Following the attack on the three communities, it was learnt that people from neighbouring communities of Asarama, Unyeada, Egendem, Ibotirem, Samanga, Dema amongst others, fled their homes.

Musa while confirming the attack said the operation to Ajakajak targeted houses belonging to the suspected militants in Andoni led by Adumu.

He said in a telephone communication, "Intelligence report available to the JTF revealed that abduction, sea piracy, armed robbery, ransacking and maiming of people in Okukpoi, Ajakajak/ Orgbudia and the neighbouring Kaa Waterside communities in Andoni Local Government Area were mostly planned and victims taken to the camp of a notorious militant leader, Mr. George Adumu.

"He has an evil forest which he operates in league with the wanted Soboma George and Dede Bortlemow. As a responsible outfit, we are duty-bound to destroy the camp, mob up the general area including selected houses and shrines of militant leaders to recover arms, ammunition and documents as well as arrest the ring leaders.

"The affected areas depend on us to save them from the grip of the bandits and we are

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poised to restore the confidence of the people on the ability of security agencies to ensure the safety of lives and property.

"Consequently, the camp was attacked and destroyed but unfortunately, no bandit was killed or arrested."

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