

# Seven militants die in clash with JTF

## ...Task Force raises the alarm over smear campaign

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**A**NOTHER seven suspected militants were feared killed on Saturday along the Bonny Waterway, Rivers State, during a confrontation with the naval component of the Joint Task Force, Operation Restore Hope.

This comes as the JTF raised the alarm over what it described as smear campaign on its operations by sponsors of militant groups based abroad.

The spokesman of the task force, Col. Rabe Abubakar raised the alarm in an email to *SUNDAY PUNCH*.

But a top security source told our correspondent that naval gunboats belonging to the NNS Pathfinder encountered eight suspected militants on a speedboat in a location between Isaka and Bakana at about 4.p.m.

He said as soon as the militants got within the range of the naval gunboats, they opened fire and made to escape but the troops responded with superior gunfire.

In the ensuing battle, he said seven of the militants were killed while one dived into the river and swam to safety, leaving behind some arms in the floating boat.

He said three AK 47 rifles loaded with double magazines were recovered from the boat.

The source, however, said there were no casualties from the side of the JTF.

When contacted on the telephone, Abubakar will not take his calls, neither did he respond to messages sent to his mobile phone.

But in the mail, he said intelligence report showed

that there was a grand plan by members of the Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta in the Diaspora to launch a propaganda against the task force.

He explained that the campaign was aimed at tarnishing the JTF image and

distract it from its responsibility in the Niger Delta.

The mail reads in part, "The JTF therefore wishes to inform this group and any other group that it would not be intimidated and no amount of smear campaign; hatched by this group would deter it from carrying out its national duties."



**•L-R: Zonal Coordinator, Special Marshal and Partnership, Federal Road Safety Commission, Zone Two, Prince F. A. B. Adenekan; Zonal Commanding Officer, Wole Olaniran; State Coordinator, Alhaji Toyin Kadiku; and Sector Commander, Cmdr. Jonas Agwu, during the FRSC's special marshal workshop 2009, organised by the commission, in Lagos ... recently**