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Pirates attack vessels in Rivers

By CHUKWUDI AKASIKE

Sunday, 4 Jul 2010

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A foreign sailor was killed while 12 others were allegedly abducted by unknown gunmen suspected to be sea pirates who attacked two cargo vessels some distance away from Bonny coast in Rivers State.

Occupants of the vessels, including the sailor, were said to be mainly Europeans.

The Commander of the NNS Pathfinder, Commodore Umar Ahmed, who confirmed the attack, said investigation into the case had begun.

It was gathered that the attack on BBC Palonia and one other vessel, took place at about 6pm on Friday, even as the Navy said it had put in measures to ensure the release of those held hostage.

Speaking on the incident, the State Police Public Relations Officer, Dr. (Mrs.) Rita Inoma-Abbey, said the command received assurance from the Commandant of the NNS Pathfinder that the Navy had swung into action with a view to securing freedom for the hostages.

"The Navy Pathfinder informed the (Police) Command that on Friday some pirates attacked Cargo Vessel BBC Palonia and one other at about 1800hours, from South of Bonny FWB.

"Members of the crew were mainly Eastern Europeans. One of them had been confirmed to have been shot dead while others were taken hostage. The Nigerian Navy has already deployed men from Bonny to investigate the incident," the police spokesperson said.

But the Joint Task Force spokesperson, Lt. Col. Timothy Atinga, told SUNDAY PUNCH in a telephone interview on Saturday that those behind the attack of the vessels were sea robbers and not sea pirates.

Atinga, who said he was in Benin when the call came through, added that he would get the details of the incident the moment he reached Yenegoa, the Bayelsa State capital.

He, however, pointed out that security operatives were on the ground to bring the situation under control and to ensure the release of the foreigners.

"I am sure that all relevant security agents are on the ground and working towards the release of those held hostage," Atinga stressed.

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