

Soldiers avenging colleagues killing invade Rivers community



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LANDLORDS and residents of the Bille community, in the Degema Local Government Area of Rivers State, have abandoned their homes after soldiers invaded the community over the killing of some soldiers by suspected pirates.

PUNCH Metro gathered that the suspected pirates, after killing the military men in the community, carted away their weapons.

A resident, who spoke from his hideout in the community, said the soldiers, during the invasion, shot sporadically and allegedly broke into residents' homes and to intimidate them.

He said the situation forced many residents to flee the community as the troops said they were searching for pirates who attacked their gunboat.

The resident said, "Some military men came with gun boats. They said they were looking for pirates that attacked their soldiers. We also lost one of our sons from the pirate attack last Friday. Just yesterday they invaded a nearby community. Today they invaded the Bille community.

"I am calling from my hideout. Many people have left the community. They are harassing youths, flogging and injuring people. As I speak to you, they are shooting sporadically in the community and people have fled. The place is empty."

The President, Bille Youths Federation, Osaki Wellington, who said pirate attacks had been causing tension in the community, added that the military invasion aggravated the situation.

"The community was actually tense because we lost our son and now the military is coming in again," he stated.

Contacted, the spokesperson for the 6 Division, Nigeria Army, Port Harcourt, Major Iweha Ikedichi, said the soldiers were in the community for an operation.

He said, "Troops conducted an operation in the general area of Bille and that is in response to the killing of soldiers in and around that community last week.

"The operation is consequent upon that, and targeted at arresting perpetrators and recovering the stolen weapons of the troops that were killed. The operation will continue following actionable intelligence as we receive."

Meanwhile, a stray bullet from a soldier's gun allegedly hit a lady along Harbour Road in the Port Harcourt area of the state.

An eyewitness, who does not want to be mentioned for security reasons, said the soldier was chasing a man, who was transporting illegally refined petroleum products along the route on Tuesday.

The eyewitness said the military man chased the suspect round the area and fired into the air, adding that as the suspect, while speeding off in his Toyota Camry, rammed into the fence of a hotel.

"It was like a movie when the vehicle crashed into the hotel, the military man jumped on the vehicle and the man came out and took to his heels. The soldier shot, but the bullet hit a lady who was on her own. She was immediately rushed to the hospital," he said.

Contacted, the state Police Public Relations Officer, Grace Iringe-Koko, said she was yet to receive a report of the incident.