

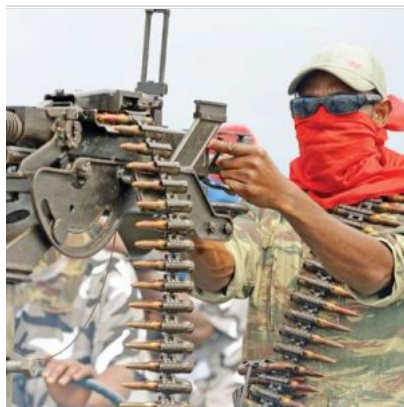
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2 soldiers killed in Delta creeks as militants blow up gas pipeline

— 21st May 2016

FROM EMMANUEL OGOIGBE WARRI

TWO soldiers have been confirmed dead and several others injured in a boat mishap involving military patrol team around the creeks of Egwa 1 near Warri in Warri South West Local Government Area of Delta State.

Sources told our correspondent that the incident occurred Friday at 10am as a military gunboat involved in the search of Niger Delta militants had an accident.

The incident, it was learnt, has thrown the Joint Task Force (JTF), Operation Pulo Shied and 3 Battalion of the Nigerian Army Effurun into mourning.

Community sources also confirmed the incident but could not give details.

They also said that the incident has increased tension in the creeks of Delta as nobody knows how the military will react to the incident.

A senior military officer, who later confirmed the incident, said the military boat was carrying about 10 soldiers when it capsized. The officer said they were on a normal routine patrol of oil installations around the Egwa 1 community when the incident occurred.

It was further gathered that those who sustained various degrees of injuries have been conveyed to an undisclosed hospital for medical care in the oil city of Warri.

"We lost two of our soldiers to boat mishap early this morning (Friday) around Egwa 1 in Warri South West area. They were patrolling the creeks when the incident happened. Report reaching us says scores were injured", the officer, who spoke on condition of anonymity said.

Attempt to get the Commanding Officer (CO) 3 Battalion, Effurun Barracks, Major Monday Azanku to confirm the development did not yield result as calls to his mobile phone did not go through.

Col. Isa Ado, JTF's spokesman could not be reached for response as well. Calls and a text message sent to his telephone line were equally not answered or replied.

Meanwhile, Ijaw militants yesterday blew up the multi billions naira Escravos gas pipeline in Warri South West Local Government. The incident according to a dependable source has created a lot of tension resulting in sporadic shooting between militants and soldiers just as villagers around the environment have fled into the bush for safety. Consequently, more military men have been deployed to the troubled riverine communities.

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