

...LG boss condemns troops' action

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SHARES VIEWS

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The suspected mastermind of the killing of four naval ratings and kidnap of three expatriates off the coast of Bayelsa State has been feared dead in an invasion of Bilabiri community in Ekeremor Local Government Area of Bayelsa State.

On January 7, gunmen had stormed the coast off Agge in Ekeremor Local Government Area and seized a dredger owned by Sterling Global Dredger being escorted by naval personnel. The gunmen in the process of abducting the

three foreigners working with the firm gunned down four naval ratings.

Though the three kidnapped foreigners were later rescued, naval operatives and military intelligence officers began a manhunt for the alleged killers which led to the invasion of Bilibiri community.

According to investigations, troops from the military formation in Bayelsa State on Friday January 17 invaded Bilibiri in 19 gunboats in search of the gang.

The operation in the community which lasted for three hours, was said to have led to the death of the key suspect in the killing of the naval ratings.

There is, however, confusion whether it was the Flag Officer Commanding (FOC) of the Central Naval Command (CNC) headquarters Yenagoa, Rear Admiral Saidu Garba or the Commander of Operation Delta Safe (OPDS) Joint Task Force, Rear Admiral Akinjide Akinrinade that ordered the invasion,

Though the confusion was not clear as none of the military formations has issued any statement in response to inquiry on the reason for the invasion, sources said both Akinrinade and Garba have zero tolerance for hoodlums that kill military personnel under their command.

A military source disclosed that the Army was not involved in the operation, noting that it was the Navy that carried out the operation.

“Contrary to what people are saying, the operation was not carried out by the Army but naval personnel. The Army has no facility in that area; it is only the navy that operates there. The military does not condone criminality and that is why the Navy went hard on the people of the area for the killing of the four naval ratings.”

The Chairman of Ekeremor local government council, Dr Bertola Perekeme, has condemned the invasion and burning of houses in the community.

Perekeme in a statement condoled with the military over the loss of lives and noted, however, that invading communities and burning of houses in the guise of searching for criminals is not fashionable in a democratic setting.

He expressed regret that communities whose inhabitants have been living in fear of continued intimidation by criminal elements would be subjected to military invasion.