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Many feared dead as troops raid militants' camps

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The Joint Task Force (JTF) codenamed “Operation Delta Safe” yesterday raided militants’ camps in Okosugbene along the Burutu/Warri in Burutu Local Government Area of Delta State.



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Several militants lost their lives during the operation while some others fled into the bush and nearby villages to escape from the military onslaught.

The military occupation, New Telegraph gathered, was carried out with two fighters jets and seven gunboats at about 6a.m. The troops combed the locality for over 55 minutes.

The militants' hideout is located at Lapala village, near Burutu. The camps were said to be abandoned hideouts used by the former militant group, Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND), and now occupied by sea pirates.

The JTF was said to have acted on a tip-off on a raid that lasted for about an hour. "Information about casualties is still unknown. The raid caused tension among dwellers of riverine communities as residents fled for safety," the source said. Inhabitants of the area were thrown into confusion while the operation lasted.

A source told our correspondent that the militants were trapped by the soldiers. Although, a youth leader in the axis, who confirmed the attack said the residents of the area scampered for safety during the operation.





He also said that some of the militants died in the operation. He said: “We suddenly heard a gunshot, which was accompanied by several others, on Thursday morning in the community. It immediately triggered tension among us before we started running helter-skelter.

“From our findings, we discovered that the military had invaded the gathering of suspected militants, who had converged on the community in what could be likened to a militant camp.”

A resident of Burutu, who said he narrowly escaped the military onslaught, which woke indigenes of the area up as early as 5:45a.m.yesterday, wondered why the soldiers were unmindful and insensitive to the plights of innocent people of the area.

“The military bombardment was an eyesore. It speaks volume about tactical military intelligence of the Nigerian Army. That was how they suddenly invaded Gbaramatu Kingdom, destroyed so many things and carted away artefacts. They should have carried out their operations with deft strategy,” the source said.



Former chairman of Burutu community, Mr. Jonathan Ogodobiri, who was contacted on telephone, denied the presence of troops in the locality, but admitted that “the entire waterway is under siege.”



He said the whole of the rivers has been overtaken by heavy military personnel patrolling the river.

A senior operative of the Department of State Services (DSS) said: “There were intelligence reports that suspected militants were converging on the area, hence men of the Operation Safe Delta were drafted to engage the militants and dislodge the camp located at an area known as 9000 Junction.”

According to security sources, the intelligence units of the JTF had been keeping surveillance on the developments of the new camps until yesterday when the operations moved in to destroy the camps. Investigation revealed that the camps were being set up by militants at Kosugbene village near Gbekubor, around Ogbe- Ijoh in Warri South West Local Government area of the state.

A senior military officer disclosed to our correspondent that: “Our intelligence units have been following the developments of the camps since they were being put in place by the miscreants. But we had to move in now to destroy them before they become a major problem for us all.”



The operation, it was learnt, lasted for several hours as the soldiers ensured that nothing could be salvaged from the destroyed camps.