

Army loses 9 personnel, rescues abducted NNPC officials

July 27, 2017 Adeola Yusuf and Ahmed Miringa



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Troops of the Nigerian Army yesterday lost an officer and eight soldiers in an operation which led to the rescue of 10 top officials, including senior geologists on contract with the Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation (NNPC) on the oil search mission in the North-East. But the troops killed scores of Boko Haram insurgents in the operation.

The corpses of an officer, eight soldiers and a civilian, who died in the incident, had been evacuated to 7 Division Medical Services and Hospital in Maiduguri, Borno State.

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This incident, which swiftly set jitters down the spine of geologists and other supporting staff on the exploration mission, has again constituted a major setback to the North's oil search, on which over N600 billion had been invested.



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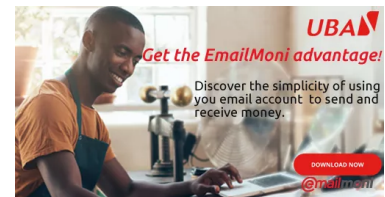
The Director Army Public Relations, Brig-Gen. Sani Usman, who confirmed the casualty figures in a statement yesterday, said: "So far, they have rescued all the NNPC staff and recovered the corpses of the officer, eight soldiers and a civilian have who have been evacuated to 7 Division Medical Services and Hospital."

The abducted geologists, who are members of the University of Maiduguri's research team on contracted oil prospecting for NNPC in North-East Nigeria, were kidnapped near

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Jibi village, Magumeri local government area, about 50 km (30 miles) from the state capital, Maiduguri, Borno state on Tuesday afternoon.

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Giving graphic details of the incident, Brig-Gen. Usman, however, stated: "On Tuesday, 25th July 2017, at about 3p.m., suspected Boko Haram terrorists ambushed the escort and team of NNPC staff returning from oil exploration at Barno Yasu, Magumeri Local Government Area of Borno State.

"On receipt of the information, the Brigade mobilized and sent reinforcement, search and rescue party that include the Armed Forces Special Forces and guides that worked and pursued the terrorists throughout the night.

"So far, they have rescued all the NNPC staff and recovered the corpses of the officer, eight soldiers and a civilian have who have been evacuated to 7 Division Medical Services and Hospital.

"The team recovered four vehicles one of which includes a gun truck mounted with an Anti-Aircraft Gun, two white Hilux vans taken away from NNPC staff and one blue Hilux belonging to the CJTF.

The team also recovered large quantities of arms and ammunition, several spare tyres, many jerry cans containing petroleum, oil and lubricant, assorted drugs, Improvised Explosive Device (IED) making materials, reflective jackets and a Motorola handheld radio, among others. The team also neutralized many of the terrorists.

"The troops are not relenting in the pursuit, search and rescue effort."

A source said that suspected insurgents attacked a convoy of oil workers at a village along Gubio and Magumeri local government areas on Tuesday. He said the attackers ambushed the oil workers who were travelling in a convoy of about 10 vehicles.

The oil workers were engaged in oil exploration in the Lake Chad Basin.

According to the source, some staff of the University of Maiduguri were also part of the team. It added that nine soldiers and some members of a Civilian Joint Task Force (CJTF), who were also part of the team, were killed during the attack.

Our correspondent gathered that troops of Operation Lafiya Dole, members of Civilian Joint Task Force (JTF) and vigilante pursued the fleeing terrorists, killing scores of them, while others escaped with gunshot wounds.

The Joint Operation, which was led by the Brigade Commander, Brig- Gen. Aminu Shehu Chinide and leader of the Civilian JTF in Gubio, Bulama Bukar Maradona mobilized by the Borno State Commissioner for Local Government and Chieftaincy Affairs, Hon. Usman Zanna and support from the Caretaker Chairman of Gubio, Hon. Zanna Modu, led to the recovery of several arms and ammunition and four vehicles belonging to the victims that were snatched by the insurgents.

Confirming the incident yesterday to newsmen in a telephone chat, the Caretaker Chairman of Gubio, Hon. Zanna Modu, expressed happiness that almost all the

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The Federal High Court Abuja, on Thursday fixed August 7, to hear the suit that stopped the Independent National Electoral Commission, INEC, from going ahead with the process of Sen. Dino Melaye's recall. The suit which was originally adjourned till September 29, will now be heard on August 7. Justice Nnamdi Dimgba said he was minded to exercise his discretion to hear the matter within the court's vacation period. [262 more words]

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insurgents who partook in the attack were neutralized by troops. He said details of the number of casualties from the side of the terrorists were devastating, but decline to give details.

An embargo had earlier been placed on the oil search in the North on which over N600 billion (\$2 billion) had so far been invested, confirming earlier reports by New Telegraph. NNPC, which on May 15 promised to return to site "in six weeks," issued the temporary embargo after it failed to secure safety clearance from the military authority, this newspaper authoritatively reported.

In a report entitled: "North's N600bn oil search suffers setback," published on June 5, this newspaper had earlier revealed that the promise made by the Group Managing Director of the corporation, Dr. Maikanti Baru, on May 15 to return to site in "six weeks" could not come to fruition due to inability to move the equipment in the third week, based on the failure to secure clearance from the military just two weeks to the time promised. Group General Manager, Group Public Affairs Division of NNPC, Ndu Ughamadu, who validated the investigation by this newspaper, told our correspondent that exploration could not commence as promised.

Checks by this newspaper, however, showed that the military could not give the corporation a go-ahead based on security risks of mobilizing personnel and equipment to site.

Hinting that mobilization of personnel and equipment had been officially deferred, Ughamadu, however, expressed confidence that the clearance would be given soon. Ughamadu could, however, not confirm whether the corporation eventually secured a security clearance from the military authority before it deployed the 10 contractors that were kidnapped and rescued yesterday.

The NNPC had invested approximately \$1.3 billion up to the end of 1998, while over \$700 million had been invested afterward, according to this newspaper's investigation.

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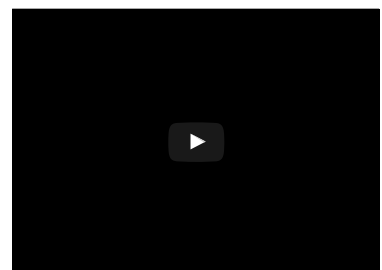
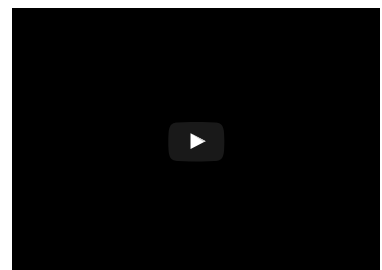
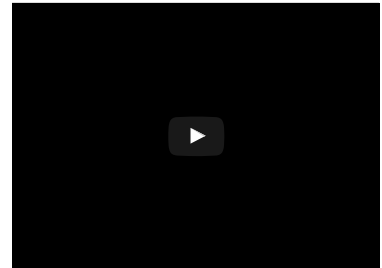
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