

Ambush: Gunmen kill six soldiers in Bayelsa, Plateau

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Armed men have killed four soldiers in Bayelsa State and also murdered two others in Plateau State.

The Joint Military Force in the Niger Delta yesterday confirmed that four soldiers were killed in an ambush by gunmen at Letugbene in Bayelsa State.

The spokesman for the joint force code-named Operation Delta Safe (OPDS), Major Victor Olukoya, told the News Agency of Nigeria (NAN) that the incident occurred last Sunday.

He said: "Troops, while carrying out their routine duty within OPDS' area of responsibility on February 16, about 6p.m., were ambushed by unknown gunmen.

"Four soldiers were killed in action. However, investigation is ongoing to ascertain the persons or groups behind the attack."

Olukoya debunked an online media report that the soldiers invaded the community in a reprisal, describing the report as false and unfounded.

He added: "It is important to state here that contrary to an online report, the men of OPDS did not invade Ekeremor community at any time.

"The military is an organised and disciplined force and all its operations are guided by codes of conduct and rules of engagement.

"So it cannot be seen to behave in the manner that was perpetrated by an online report."

Olukoya said that the mandate of OPDS was to protect oil facilities, deter militancy and oil theft as well as other forms of militancy.

He said OPDS had no business with invading communities, but had remained committed to securing

the lives of law-abiding residents.

According to him, commanders of the troops who visited the areas, found the people going about their normal businesses.

He added: “The Commander Operation Delta Safe along with Commander 16 Brigade and Commander Sector 2 were in Letugene Beneside, Ogbotobo, Tunu and other communities in Ekeremor Local Government Area.

“They observed citizens going about their lawful duties without any hindrance contrary to the erroneous impression created in the false news report.

“The OPDS advises the good people of Ekeremor LGA to please remain law-abiding as the command will fish out the perpetrators of the ungodly act and ensure a secured environment for all.”

Meanwhile, gunmen suspected to be herdsmen attacked men of Sector Five of the Special Task Force, Operation Save Haven (OPSH), killed two soldiers and injured one at X-Land of Barkin Ladi Local Government Area of Plateau State.

A witness and resident of the area, who preferred anonymity, told NAN that the incident occurred on Sunday.

The witness said the soldiers, who were angered by the incident, gave the community two days to provide their attackers, and on Tuesday allegedly raided the area and burnt down scores of houses.

The witness also who said the houses burnt largely belonged to the Fulani settlers in the community.

The resident added that the soldiers also made some arrests during the raiding.

He said: “On Sunday, gunmen attacked soldiers of the Sector Five, killed two personnel and ran into the houses of Fulani settlers living here in X-Land.

“Soldiers came and had a meeting with the Fulani and told them to provide the culprits but they failed to, and yesterday (Tuesday) soldiers came and raided the community.

“They burnt down many houses, over 100 and arrested some persons.”

Efforts to reach the spokesperson for the task force, Maj. Ibrahim Shittu, on the matter were unsuccessful.

In a text message, Shittu only promised to contact our correspondent.

It reads: “I have seen your text, will get back to you on it, please.”

But the state Public Relations Officer (PPRO), ASP Obah Ogaba, confirmed the incident.

He said: “It is true that gunmen ambushed security personnel of Sector Five, opened fire on them, killed two soldiers and injured one.

“The issue of burnt houses is not the key matter, but soldiers are attacked and two were killed and this is the major concern, here.”

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