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3 Naval Men Feared Killed by Militants

From Ahamefula Ogbu in Port Harcourt, 07.04.2007

Notwithstanding the pledge by the dreaded militant commander of the Niger Delta Vigilance Movement, Chief Ateke Tom that he was ceasing hostilities in the Niger Delta to explore peaceful resolution of the crises, a clash between him and the Nigerian Navy at Okrika channels yesterday left three naval officers dead.

Naval Director of Information, Captain Obiorah Medani however denied that their men were dead but admitted they were missing though he said they were two as against the three claimed by Ateke's group.

Ateke through one of his aides simply identified as Ananika claimed that the Navy set out to kill him on Monday night while he was returning to his base as they allegedly attacked his own boats near Okrika.

Ateke's aid claimed that they merely defended themselves against the onslaught of the navy and in the end; nobody in their convoy was hurt while he claimed that they destroyed three of the naval boats while three of their attackers drowned in the encounter. The militant group has therefore warned that it may be pushed into commencing attacks which they had pledged to suspend for 90 days, wondering why they would be attacked when peaceful negotiations were on going.

On what mission they were on when the said attack took place, the militant said that they went to Okrika to answer a call by the elders of the area who had been negotiating with Ateke to ensure that he dropped arms for the general peace initiatives being pursued by the Vice President, Dr, Goodluck Jonathan and on their return, were attacked.

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