

6 Chiefs, Community Leaders Feared Killed in Ogbogoro

From Ahamefula Ogbu in Port Harcourt, 09.07.2007

Rivers

No fewer than three Chiefs and three other community leaders were feared killed yesterday in a renewed clash in Ogbogoro, Obio/Akpor Local Government Area of Rivers State in what appeared like a reprisal attack for allegedly handing over some community boys to the Joint Task Force.

The attack came few hours after Service Chiefs held a meeting in Bori Camp, Port Harcourt to review the operations of the JTF in the State where they called for caution on the part of the soldiers as well as promised to move into the suburbs in search of the trouble makers.

THISDAY learnt that trouble erupted when some boys in the troubled community alleged that their chiefs connived with the Joint Task Force to hand over some of them and attacked the chiefs for betraying their people.

Although details of the attack as at yesterday evening appeared sketchy, it was learnt that the JTF was dispatched to the community immediately information arrived Port Harcourt that the community leaders were under attack. Although the Commissioner of Police, Mr. Felix Ogbaudu confirmed that there was trouble in Ogbogoro, he would not confirm whether any community leader or chief was killed.

He insisted that though he was aware of the unrest in the community where the crisis that later rocked Port Harcourt also took its toll on, he would only confirm information which he was sure of. "After we left the parade ground, we saw the Service Chiefs off to Delta and then we went into our own meeting, from there we went to see the deputy governor from where we dispatched our men to Ogbogoro.

"I am aware of the problem there but I cannot confirm if anybody or chief was killed. Immediately I get information on that, I will confirm to you", Ogbaudu said.

Eyewitness accounts said that the community had after the wave of attacks which later spread to Port Harcourt, had organized and tried to stamp out cultism and in the process, provided information on them. The cultists were allegedly picked later by the JTF and in a reprisal attack, the cultists regrouped and attacked the Chiefs, alleging that they provided information on them and thereby handed them over to the JTF.

However, the Spokesman of JTF, Major Musa Sagir denied that any Chief or community leader handed over any cultists to them but explained that what they do was intelligence gathering after which they go after their targets. He also said that the army as a matter of policy does not disclose sources of information or betray informants, adding, "What we do is to get intelligence from the community and act on it. We do not disclose sources as it may jeopardize operations. I will not disclose any identity to either the press or anybody". As at the time of filing this report, JTF was said to have been ransacking the community looking for arms and ammunition in a bid to make arrests.