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Nigeria: Two Feared Killed As JTF, Militants Clash

This Day (Lagos)**6 November 2008**

Posted to the web 8 November 2008

THIS DAY

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Omon-Julius Onabu
 Warri

Two persons were feared dead and several others sustained injuries following a gun battle between militants and the special security Joint Task Force (JTF) in the Niger-Delta. Over a dozen speed boats were used by the militants to launch an attack on a JTF location at Clough Creek in the coastal Ekedremor Local Government Area of Bayelsa State on Wednesday.

The dead victims including a civilian, THISDAY learnt were caught in the crossfire as the JTF engaged the dare-devil militants in a fierce battle the last nearly two hours

Although, there was no independent confirmation of the exact number of casualties or which militant group carried out the attack, the JTF said officially that none of its troops was killed during the offensive.

The security outfit was silent on the number of those injured or if they militants suffered any losses in the hands of its own troops. However, the JTF spokesman, Lt-Col Rabe Abubakar, who confirmed the incident to THISDAY yesterday, noted that the militants practically succumbed to the "superior fire-power of our troops" and eventually beat a retreat. He quoted the JTF Commander, Brig-Gen Naven Wuyep Rimtip, as describing the attack as "unprovoked and unwarranted aggression" against the security personnel on a peace mission in the region.

"The attack is aimed at creating a leeway for the operation of illegal oil bunkering activities", Rimtip said, but assured that the JTF would not be drawn into a full-blown confrontation with the militants or miscreants but would "only apply minimum force, and in self-defence." He further assured: "We are in this region for internal security duties; and, we are capable of continued protection of ourselves and law abiding citizens".

He said his men were on red alert

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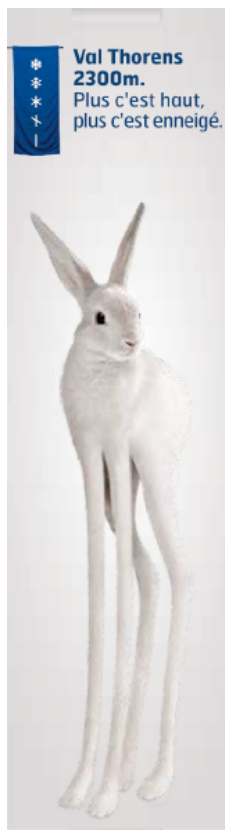
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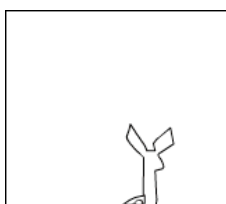
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and warned those he called "miscreants to be ready to face the consequences of their criminal actions if they persisted. Wednesday attack was coming barely 24 hours after the JTF alerted the nation to plans by the one of the militants

leaders, Ateke Tom, to begin attacks on all sea-going vessels in the Nigeri-Delta.

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