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THIS DAY

Nigeria: Soldiers, Militants Clash in Delta

Omon-Julius Onabu With Agency Reports

14 May 2009

Warri — Militants and the Joint military Task Force in the Niger Delta (JTF) yesterday clashed in the swamps of the southern Niger Delta region.

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This is coming just as unknown gunmen Tuesday kidnapped a project engineer with a construction firm, Mr. Okoh, in Warri, Delta State.

The gunmen reportedly traced the victim to his residence in the Ekpan area of Effurun, near Warri and whisked him away to an unknown destination in an Infinity SUV car.

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JTF spokesman, Col. Rabe Abubakar, who confirmed the kidnap, appealed to people with useful information on the incident to come forward, as all the security agencies had spread their dragnets in an attempt to rescue the victim and bring the criminals to book. He advised members of the public not to panic at the latest

development.

"The whereabouts of the kidnapped person is yet to be known, so also the motive for the kidnap", he noted, but added that the demand for ransom by the abductors could not be ruled out.

In the clash with the JTF, the militants claimed to have repelled an attack by the JTF and killed several troops in a "bloody battle".

Abubakar said the army had been ambushed, but had lost no troops.

A spokesman for the main militant group - the Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND) - warned of an "impending civil war" in response.

Militant groups say they are fighting for a better deal from Nigeria's oil, but some have been accused of operating like criminal gangs.

MEND spokesman Jomo Gbomo said the militants quickly retaliated the attack.

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"Two gunboats belonging to the army have already been sunk by mines with several casualties on the side of the army," he said in an email to journalists.

The militants said in an online message yesterday that it had placed all its affiliate militants on red alert in anticipation of extensive attacks by the JTF, warning oil companies that their workers may become targets of reprisal attacks by the militants.

According to MEND: "All freedom fighters in the Niger Delta have been placed

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on alert to defend their positions and unleash a horrible toll on the oil industry and the Nigerian economy.

"Oil companies operating in the region are advised to evacuate their staff within the next 24 hours to avoid them being part of the statistics of an emerging civil war," the statement further said.

But Abubakar said the MEND statement was "pure propaganda".

The JTF spokesman insisted that the militants were the aggressors, having allegedly laid an ambush for the security operatives in the creeks yesterday.

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Abubakar maintained that it was beyond the mandate of the JTF to attack militant location, except as reprisal whenever its positions or strategic oil and gas installations were attacked by the militants.



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The spokesman had earlier said the security task force had on Sunday seized a barge used for illegal bunkering in the Escravos export terminal area, but did not say if the soldiers sank the barge in question.

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Abubakar said: "Despite intensified efforts by the Joint Task Force (JTF) code-named 'Operation Restore Hope' and other security agencies to safeguard the Niger Delta region, for socio-economic activities to thrive, some miscreants who are hell-bent on frustrating this noble objective have resorted to kidnapping, a practice which has become a source of livelihood and a gimmick used by them to scare away prospective investors and portray the oil-rich region as unsafe."

MEND is still holding British hostage Matthew Maguire who was seized from an oil services boat in September last year.

His colleague Robin Hughes was freed in April.

Militant groups in the Niger Delta operate under a cloak of poor governance and a failure in the rule of law.

They fund their activities with oil theft, extortion and kidnapping.

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Author: kokoma

Thu May 14 14:20:20 2009

When would the JTF dismantle the MEND and all the other criminal gangs in the Niger Delta. I am surprised that these criminals are still allowed to talk like this and carry out their atrocities.

The government and army of Sri Lanka declared an out all war against the Tamil Tigers, the Pakistani government and their army declared punitive action against the Taliban who are set on destabilising their country. Not until a similar action is taken in the Niger Delta, raping of women and children would continue, kidnapping for ransom would continue and investors would continue to flee the... [\[Read Full Text\]](#)

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Author: tonty4u2000

Sat May 23 11:54:09 2009

From the stand point of a Niger Deltan, which I proudly am. I wish to sound it to the whole world that the latest action by the federal troops in Delta is a calculated attempt by the Nigerian nation to wipe out the Ijaw nation. As such statements emanating from the mouth of a member of the federal house of representatives that in order to save one hundred million we can afford to do away with twenty million. Is a clear expression of the desire and intents of the controllers of the Nigerian state. I therefore want to charge the... [\[Read Full Text\]](#)

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