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Soldier Killed, Two Others Wounded in Clash with Gunmen in Delta

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Nigerian soldiers

By Omon-Julius Onabu

Residents of Kokori and neighbouring areas in Ethiope East Local Government Area of Delta State are currently caught in an atmosphere of apprehension as security operatives have reportedly swooped on the town in search of unidentified gunmen who allegedly killed a soldier in the area at the weekend.

Security sources said one soldier was killed and two others seriously wounded during exchange of gunfire between a team of the Joint Task Force (JTF) and bandits suspected to be kidnappers in their suspected hideout in the area.

The soldiers, who are from the 3rd Battalion of the Nigerian Army, Effurun near Warri, were said to have last Saturday trailed members of a suspected notorious criminal gang to Kokori Town where eventually there was a crossfire with the gangsters.

The armed gang allegedly led by its leader whose name is believed to be on the top list of wanted men in the state and who was identified simply as "Kelvin," a security source said.

THISDAY however learnt that the security search for the suspected kidnap kingpin in the state intensified following last month's attack on a prison van conveying some detainees to a court in Warri.

The said Kelvin was allegedly fingered in the Okere Junction, Warri, incident in which at least four persons including prisons officials were killed and some prisoners whisked away.

The police had said the bandits were chased into Kokori area through Ughelli axis, with one of the suspects reportedly killed in a gun encounter.

Nonetheless, the killing of the soldier has precipitated the deployment of heavily armed soldiers and other security operatives in Kokori and its environs, with people in the area being subjected to serious search by the security personnel yesterday.

When contacted Monday on the issue, the Commanding Officer of the 3rd Battalion Effurun, Lt-Col Ifeanyi Otu, said efforts had been intensified to fish out the criminals and bring them to book.

Although Otu would not give details, he said details of the operation would be made public later.

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