

# Bayelsa: Soldier Injured, Four Gunmen Killed in Ambush by Pirates

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Emmanuel Addeh in Yenagoa

A soldier was injured while four gunmen were killed in an unsuccessful ambush by sea pirates in Peregbene, along the Ogbia-Nembe waterways, Bayelsa State on Tuesday. Security operatives attached to the Joint Task Force, Operation Pulo Shield, the body designated by the federal government to fight criminalities in the region, reportedly overpowered the gang of sea robbers during a shootout, killing four members of the gang in the process.

An unnamed private in the Nigerian army, was however injured in the gun duel that lasted over an hour, according to military sources.

Reports say the marauders laid ambush for the gunboat conveying the soldiers to an undisclosed location for an official assignment, resulting in several casualties.

The incident which occurred around noon yesterday, adds to the many cases of attacks on troops by the youth gangs who engage in kidnapping for ransom, robbery, crude oil theft and attack on major oil platforms in the region.

The troops were able to repel yesterday's attack, but had one of their men shot in the leg by the suspected criminals.

Coordinator, Joint Media Campaign Centre (JMCC), Col. Isa Ado, who confirmed the incident said that the soldiers were on patrol of the waterways when they saw the hoodlums between Peregbene and Obama.

Ado said the suspected pirates were riding on a speedboat with 200 horse power engine which was banned in the state's waterways when they came in contact with the army gunboat.

It was gathered that when the boys saw that they had been sighted by the patrol team, who immediately opened fire, they tried to flee, but were felled by the soldiers gunfire.

"On sighting the gunboat, the gunmen tried to escape. Our troops fired at them while they were trying to run away. As they were escaping, they were firing back at our troops. About four of them were hit by bullets. They were either dead or sustained serious injuries.

"They navigated into a narrow creek, put off the engine of their boat and ran into the creeks. They escaped with their dead. One of our soldiers was shot in the leg and he was immediately evacuated to a hospital for treatment", Ado said.

He said the troops were still combing the creeks to locate the whereabouts of the gunmen, adding that the Commander of the OPS has ensured constant patrol of the waterways to fish out economic saboteurs and other maritime criminals in accordance with the directive of the Defence Headquarters.

Meanwhile, another gang of suspected pirates has attacked a commercial boat conveying traders to Kaa in Khana, Rivers State.

The gunmen reportedly shot and killed two of the traders, injured a kid and the driver of the commercial boat.

The travellers were said to have left Bonny Island in Bonny Local Government Area of Rivers State for Kaa when their boat came under attack.

A source who lives in Bonny Island said the gunmen laid ambush and tried in vain to stop the vessel.

“The boat has 200 horse power engine. So, the driver on sighting the gunmen sped off. The gunmen chased the boat but could not catch up with it.

“They opened fire on the boat, killed two persons and injured the driver and a kid in the boat. The injured people are in a critical condition. The driver managed to bring the boat to Kaa,” the source said.

Cases of sea piracy, vandalism and other criminalities have recently spiked in the oil-rich Niger Delta, the region that produces Nigeria’s oil wealth, a development ascribed to the weakening of the enormous powers wielded by some ex-militants and their loyalists in the previous administration.