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Killing of 12 Ijaw youths: Militant group threatens reprisal attack * Ultimatum to produce 11 missing soldiers expires

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Posted to the Web: Sunday, June 24, 2007

NIGER Delta militants under the auspices of the Joint Revolutionary Council (JRC) have vowed to carry out reprisal attacks against Italian Eni energy subsidiary, Nigerian Agip Oil Company (NAOC) following last Thursday's killing of 12 suspected militants in a shootout by men of the Joint Task Force, JTF, in the Niger Delta "Operation Restore Hope", at Ogboinbiri in Southern Ijaw Local Government Area of Bayelsa State.

The killing of the militants in a clash which also led to the dislodgement of the former from the Ogboinbiri flow station as well as the liberation of 27 persons held captive came soon after the expiration of the 48-hour ultimatum handed down by the Federal Government to the Bayelsa State Government to produce the 11 soldiers trapped at the facility since Sunday, dead or alive. In an online statement entitled, "There will be reprisal action against Agip", signed by JRC spokesperson Cynthia Whyte, and mailed to Sunday Vanguard, the group alleged that the youths who laid siege on the oil facility were protesting the unwanted and criminal killing of their kinsmen a fortnight ago by the soldiers of the JTF, but lamented that the "security forces of the Nigerian state once again attacked and killed twelve of them from the area."

The statement read in part, "Let us, therefore, inform all those who were party to this evil against our people that they will get their rewards in time to come. Nigerian Agip Oil Company will be visited by the same number of casualties, pain and misfortune. Let us inform all men of goodwill that all measures and reprisal actions taken against Agip and her conspirators will in no way be related to our earlier decision to cease hostilities against the Nigerian state.

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This will be simply a pay back activity and will cut across Agip's facility in Rivers and Bayelsa states", the statement declared.

The group noted that "the killing of the twelve Ijaw youths shows how far the Nigerian state and her agents can go to ensure that the resources of the Niger Delta are exploited at the peril of the people", saying "the death of the youths must be avenged in the same manner, and that justice must be done by any means necessary and however crude."

The militants frowned that this was coming at a time when they seek to close ranks with progressive forces to ensure a better Niger Delta territory, especially as Nigerian security operatives would have the temerity to attack "our" people, just as they frowned that a bunch of Ijaw elders would allow such evil to be perpetrated on their land.

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