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Reprisal attack: We 're prepared, JTF replies militants

By Emma Amaize

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WARRI—COMMANDER of the Joint Task Force (JTF), “Operation Restore Hope” in the Niger-Delta, Brigadier-General Lawrence Ngubane, yesterday, responded to the threat by militants to launch a reprisal attack on his men over the June 21 killing of 15 militants who attacked and forcibly occupied the Ogboinbiri Flow Station in Southern Ijaw local government of Bayelsa State, owned by the Nigeria Agip Oil Company (NAOC), saying, “we look forward to seeing them, we are prepared”.

Brigadier-General Ngubane who briefed newsmen, yesterday, in Warri said that before the rescue operation, “one of the soldiers had been killed by the criminals while the other soldier was rescued along with nine civilian staff of Agip, adding, “In all, we lost three soldiers, two civilian staff of Agip and 15 militants during the Thursday dawn operation. These are precious lives of fellow Nigerians”.

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He said that before now, his position was that his troops would only retaliate if they were attacked, but now, the JTF would go to anywhere to smoke out criminals once it has sufficient information.

Saying that the JTF was not in the region to war against anyone, the Commander said the killing of the militants was in response to their two separate attacks on the troops deployed to the flow station by the criminals on June 12 and June 16 in which some lives were lost on the part of the criminals and reasonable quantity of arms and ammunition recovered from them.

He denied earlier reports by some national dailies that 12 soldiers were missing during the attack on the flow station, explaining, “It was only two soldiers and 11 Agip personnel that were held hostage”.

Commander Ngubane assured all who live and do business in the region that the Task Force would work with them to sustain a conducive environment for their operations, saying that those who have not still heeded his call not to obstruct or test the resolve of the JTF would have seen the foolishness and precariousness of their position by now.

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