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P-Harcourt: Army alleges fresh terror plot

By Jimitota Onoyume

Posted to the Web: Monday, August 27, 2007

- * Ateke, Soboma, Dagogo fingered
- * JTF kills 2 suspected cultists

PORT HARCOURT— THE Joint Task Force (JTF) in the Niger Delta alleged, yesterday, a fresh plot by cult groups led by the trio of Ateke Tom, Soboma George and Farah Dagogo to wreak havoc in the state. He said the groups planned to kit their members with military uniform to mislead the public. The army PRO, Major Sagir Musa, in a statement said these cult groups had started dressing their members in military uniform to attack residential areas in the state with a view to creating the impression that it was the JTF men at work.

He said: "The JTF has uncovered a fresh plot by three cult groups in Rivers State headed by Ateke Tom, Soboma George and Farah Dagogo to portray members of the Joint Task Force operating in the state as an occupational force that kill at will.

"In order to succeed in their nefarious activities and to beef up public sentiments against the security agents involved in the restoration of law and order in the state, they resort to illegal use of army uniform in their inter-cult crises and in the process unleash terror on innocent people with loss of lives and properties," he said.

Musa said contrary to initial report that last week's attack on Tombia community in the state where about 12 persons were killed was carried by the JTF, it was the act of the cult leaders. "This is to inform members of the public that the JTF Operation Flush Out III currently in the state is yet to patrol or deploy troops to Tombia and is, therefore, not responsible for the reported killing. As a well-trained, responsible and disciplined force, we are mindful of our noble responsibilities to the Nigerian people and Rivers State in particular," he said, and urged people of the state to be wary of miscreants in military uniform. He, however, confirmed that the JTF had reinforced its troops at Rumuekpe, Emohua Local Government Area where about 28 persons were reportedly killed last week in an inter-cult clash

He promised that the army would do everything possible to guarantee the

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safety of life and property in the state just as he appealed for support from the public to help fish out miscreants in the state.

JTF kills 2 suspected cultists

Meanwhile, men of the Joint Task Force deployed on the streets of Port Harcourt, weekend, reportedly killed two suspected cultists around Timber and Elabuchi area.

Eye witnesses described the boys as robbers. They said one of them was shot dead on the spot after snatching a necklace from a female pedestrian.

The other reportedly lost his life under related circumstance. Sources said he was killed after he robbed a trader in the early hours of Saturday at gun point. The army PRO, Major Sagir Musa, could not be reached for comments at press time.

The Brigade Commander, Port Harcourt Army Barracks and Commander of the state Joint Task Force, Brigadier-General Salihu Samuel, has been replaced with Brigadier General Sakin Yaki Bello.

According to a statement made available by the army PRO in the state, “the former Commander 2 Brigade, General Samuel Andrew Salihu has been posted to Defence Headquarters, Abuja. The posting and appointment of the two senior officers are with effect from 21 August 2007.”

Meanwhile, cases of robbery incidents around Marine Base have risen since soldiers were deployed in the streets. Some residents said the presence of soldiers had discouraged vices like hostage taking, bank robberies and others. So the only business open to the boys is house-to-house robbery. According to the residents, no fewer than five houses have been robbed in the area within the last one week.

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