

Navy kills 7 militants, loses 1 officer in gun battle

By Kingsley Omonobi,
Emma Arubi

ABUJA—THE Nigerian Navy yesterday explained its version of the attack on its Warship in the Niger Delta by militants saying its personnel killed seven militants while one Naval personnel on 'lookout duty' was killed when the militants in four boats attempted to attack the ship, NNS Obula.

According to the Naval High Command, the Naval Officer, who was performing the 'lookout duty' observed that some boats carrying suspicious persons were approaching the Naval ship at about 2 am Wednesday and he immediately raised an alarm resulting in his being shot at and killed immediately.

"Security men on guard immediately responded and opened fire resulting in the death of seven sea robbers while the remaining boats

fled."

A statement signed by the Director of Naval Information, Capt. Henry Babalola reads, "The Nigerian Navy's attention is drawn to the rather distorted version of her ship, NNS Obula's encounter with sea robbers posing as militants, off Finnuwa oil field in the early hours of 31st October 2007"

"The ship was on routine patrol in an area where fishing trawlers largely operate due to upsurge in attacks when a lookout (Watchman) on the ship observed that a boat was approaching menacingly. He raised an alarm and he was killed instantly. Security men on guard immediately opened fire resulting in the death of seven sea robbers while the remaining boats fled."

"The whole idea is to scare the fishing trawlers into believing that the Navy was incapable of protecting them.

This has fallen flat on their face as NNS Obula, joined by other ships are still on task."

Reiterating that the Nigerian Navy will continue to perform her statutory policing functions, the statement "warned of very dire consequences if sea robbers and other miscreants do not desist from attacks on their facilities."

"The need for political solution to the Niger Delta problem and matured restraint from the Nigerian Navy should not be mistaken for lack of firepower to curtail illegalities in the Niger Delta" the statement further said.

The Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND) claimed responsibility for the attack saying it was carried out to prove to oil companies in the Niger Delta that the military presence could not prevent them from carrying out any action if they so wished.