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VANGUARD

Nigeria: Kidnappers Hold Rivers State Hostage

Jimitota Onoyume
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7 February 2009

It was at the meeting that two boys that were fully armed allegedly shot him to death. And then disappeared

Another militant leader in the state told the Vanguard on phone that the Bush Boys which came to be known as Peace Makers traces its root to Okrika. And it came into being around 1999 as a structure set up by some persons in the community to resist Ateke Tom and his group in the community then perceived to be working for the state government.

According to the militant leader who spoke under cover he said Ateke Tom and his group where being used then by the government to harass the community to transform into a PDP area. And also fight other political battles. When the intimidation became too much according to the source some persons who felt bitter with the situation had no choice but to evolve a structure to challenge the might of Ateke Tom and his group.

Meanwhile, like similar structures in the state, this Bush Boys the source said later transformed into a cult like organization with membership spreading to other parts of the state.

The source said at the time of the death of Sunny Opuebe, the rivalry between Ateke's group and the Bush boys was still there. The source also said that the Bush Boys were also not in good terms with the Out laws led by Soboma George

" He is the leader of the Bush Boys. We don't know why he was killed. He has dropped arms. He is not into arms at the moment. So we don't know where the death came from. The Bush Boys is a militant group because they carry arms.

They took off in 1999. They came up to resist Ateke Tom and his domination in Okrika at a time. I understand the rivalry between Ateke Tom's group and the Bush Boys is till there. I also know that they are not in good terms with the Soboma George's group.

Their name changed to Peace Makers at a time, because they made it clear to Okrika community that they came to make peace in the town. Though we don't know where this death came from but our thoughts are pointing at a direction". Sources close to the Bush Boys also added that the structure is an affiliate of the Movement for the Emancipation of Niger Delta.

Also head of Green Landers, another local cult group in Okrika who was simply identified as Theophilus was reportedly shot mysteriously.

Also four militant youths were reportedly killed around Alakirki flow stations by rival group. JTF spokesman in the state Lieutenant Col Sagir Musa said the security body had no hand in the death. Community sources feared that the death would have come from their rival body.

NIGERIAN army on its part has described as worrisome the senseless killing of youths and innocent people in the Niger Delta in the name of militancy. Major General Sarki Yarki Bello who spoke

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last Wednesday while handing over as Commander of the II Brigade, Port Harcourt army barracks said he was really bothered by the callous actions of those behind these killings and other related crimes like hostage taking in the region.

**Conflict, Peace and Security
Nigeria**

He urged them to give peace a chance so that development could come to the state and the region. According to him, dialogue was a better tool to resolving any situation than resorting to violence and senseless killings.

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