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Over 8 ship captains lost to piracy -Merchant Navy boss

Written by Godfrey Bivbere & Ifeyinwa Obi Friday, 27 March 2009

THE President of the Merchant Navy Officers Association of Nigeria (MNOAN), Captain Thomas Kemewerigha said that they have lost over eight of their members in recent time to piracy attacks, despite repeated assurances from the Nigerian Navy to make the country's waters free from the activities of sea



The MNOAN boss said that the sea robbers have continued to molestation their members incessantly without any help in sight from the part of government.

Kemewerigha said that the Nigeria Navy would have to be adequately equip in order for them to take the battle to the door steps of the pirates.

He said after the attack on about four vessels this year, fish trawler operators decided to commence harvesting outside Nigerian waters but the ships were also attacked on their way back into the country.

He noted that the attack on F.T Star1 and the killing of the ship's Captain Pius Itumogbe, after several of such attacks in the last couple of weeks, has forced trawler operators in the country to move their operations to neighboring countries.

According to him, "There was piracy conference in Abuja, so many things were said at the end of the day nothing came out. Just last week, we had an attack on fishing Trawler, "Star 1"trawler belonging to one of the vessels owners in this country, a captain was killed, he is still in the mortuary, a lot of crew were equally injured.

I think government really has to come out and do something tangible to curb this because a lot of more serious things are bound to equally happen after this. If the Navy could come out to tell the whole world that they cannot match up with the pirates because of platform, it means the custodians of the territorial waters have given up hope"

In his words "here is an industry that is not only employing Nigerians but it is equally earning foreign exchange for this great nation, yet, the cost of sailing a vessel for 45 days is very high because of the high price of diesel. If the government wants to kill the industry, let them kill it and increase the unemployment rate. To sail a vessel for 45 days would cost you about N9million.

What would you get from the sea that you would sell and get your money back, you are paying the crew, you are feeding them, you are buying water. At the end of the day pirates will attack you at sea, loot all you cargo and your electronics and kill your

Voice of America which also reported the recent increase in piracy attack on Nigerian waters said that the pirates attacked at night, with their speedboat roaring out of the waves firing their AK_47s. The crew realized they were under attack when their trawler was peppered with a hale of bullets.

Some of the crew on board the fishing trawlers that have previously been attacked narrated their ordeal

"They got us at about 1.30 a.m., they came on board, they came with a speed boat, nine of them all armed. They came looking for money, they ate our food and looted the ship of anything of value, including the captain's shoes.

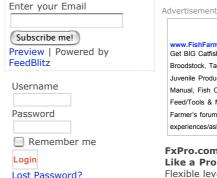


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