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VANGUARD

Nigeria: Militant Leader Shot Dead

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Akure — Odi militant leader, Ken Nweigha, also known as Daddy Ken, key actor in the killing of 12 policemen in Odi in 1999 and arrested Tuesday by the police has been shot dead in a cross fire.

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Meanwhile, there is palpable apprehension in Arogbo Ijaw Kingdom of Ondo State, as well as in the Ilaje area of the state over allegations that leader of Camp 5 militant group, Government Ekpemupolo, alias Tompolo, was sighted in Ilaje area of the state.

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Tompolo, it will be recalled, was declared wanted by the Joint Task Force last Thursday.

Also, the JTF yesterday discovered a fresh arms dump abandoned by retreating militants near Camp 5 in Delta State. Found in the arms dump were three rocket-propelled grenades (RPGs) and seven primed bombs abandoned by the militants.

Spokesman of the JTF, Col. Rabe Abubakar said the militants were stock-piling different kinds of sophisticated arms in their bid to continue causing crisis in Gbaramatu, adding that the cordon and search operations will continue.

Militant leader shot dead

The late Ken Nweigha who allegedly led the killing of some policemen including an Assistant Commissioner of Police in Odi, Bayelsa State in 1999 which led to the invasion and destruction of the town by the military was reportedly killed in a cross fire following an alleged attempt by members of his gang to rescue him.

Fondly called 'Daddy Ken' by his loyalists, the deceased who was said to have escaped during the 2005 Port Harcourt jailbreak alongside other suspects standing trial over their alleged involvement in the killing of policemen met his Waterloo at exactly midnight in the early hours of yesterday. This was about seven hours after he was paraded in handcuffs before journalists in Yenagoa.

Confirming the death of the militant leader, the state Commissioner of Police, Elder Udeka Onuoha, told newsmen that he was being taken to Odi to show the Police where he claimed to have concealed his weapons when members of his gang engaged his men in a shoot-out, with a view to freeing him.

The deceased, he said, was shot in his bid to escape following the shoot out.

His words: "He (Ken) promised he was going to lead us to the area where his weapons were kept but we didn't know he had planned with his men to attack us so that he could escape. On getting to Odi at about midnight, we had planned to cordon off the area early this morning (Wednesday)."

But the state police boss said his men were ambushed on their way by members of the deceased's gang who opened fire on them.

"Our men are capable and they fought back and Ken was shot while trying to escape."

The body of the deceased, he said, has since been deposited at the Federal Medical Centre, Yenagoa with security reinforced at Odi to maintain law and

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Fear in Ondo over Tompolo

As a result of the fear of the people of Arogbo Ijaw community in Ese Odo Local Government Area of Ondo State, the people have put some measures in place to ensure that fleeing militants do not infiltrate their communities.

Already, vigilance groups have been put in place by the community to man strategic entry points while town criers roam the streets to warn the people not to welcome any visitor till the end of June this year.

These measures, according to the secretary of the Kingdom's Traditional Council, Chief Reuben Bekewe, is coming on the heels of the unknown whereabouts of Tompolo and the allegation that he was sighted in Ilaje area of the state.

Vanguard gathered that the measure became necessary in view of the new found freedom enjoyed by the people since the JTF attack on the militants started.

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According to a source, "some of us had always warned of the dangers of their activities; for us in Arogbo Kingdom, the Niger Delta region deserves its own share of development but not with the way these boys have hijacked it all in the name of struggle to perpetrate criminality.

"We will not be involved at all; that is why the leadership of the town has taken it upon itself to ensure that the boys do not infiltrate our community because they were in the first place

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using their guns to even oppress our people.

Bekewe told newsmen that the measures became necessary in view of the dangerous implications the presence of unknown foreigners would have on the community.

According to him, "It is true that the community took those measures you have referred to; we did not want to make those measures media events, but since you are asking, I can confirm on behalf of the kingdom that we have banned visitors from coming into the town.

"Everybody is aware and no one can flout the order of the traditional council. The truth of the matter is that the Ijaw desire a better place in the country but we equally detest the way some youths have taken to criminality all in the name of freedom fighting", the source hinted.

Meanwhile, fear has gripped the people of Ilaje over the allegation that the wanted militant was sighted in the area. Some leaders spoken to denied the allegation saying that there was no hiding place in the area where he was said to have been sighted.

Nweigha not 'Bayelsa Volunteer' -Govt

Meanwhile, the state government has dismissed claims that the deceased Ken was the coordinator of the state-owned security outfit, Bayelsa Volunteers in Odi.

Chairman of the Bayelsa Volunteers, Mr. Sunny Goli said the deceased was on suspension from the security outfit over a security report that indicted him on carrying of arms by the State Security Service (SSS) adding that he has been sacked from his job.

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According to Goli, no member of the Bayelsa Volunteers is authorised to carry arms as their duty is to pass information to security agencies.



His words: "He was not authorised to carry any gun because the law does not accept that. As Bayelsa Volunteers, our work is to pass necessary information to security agencies to act upon in the state. We have policemen attached to us, known as anti-vice squad. They are the ones authorised to carry arms, not Bayelsa Volunteers. I am telling you that he was not allowed to carry arms.

"He, alongside the Sagbama co-ordinator have been suspended on different grounds."

On the cry by the people of Odi that some strange faces believed to be militants that fled Delta State were seen around the community, Goli said the Bayelsa Volunteer is on top of the situation and would pass necessary information to security agencies.

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He further explained that the Bayelsa Volunteer is investigating the operation of a militant camp in the community.

Reps hold talks with Service Chiefs

The House of Representatives on its part, yesterday, mandated its Ad-hoc Committee on Niger Delta Crisis to meet with the Chief of Army Staff, Lt. General Abdulrahman Bello Dambazzau, and his Navy and Air Force counterparts, Rear Admiral Ishaya Ibrahim and Air Vice Marshal Oluseyi Pentirin, respectively over the raging battle between the Joint Task Force and militants in the Niger Delta.

The Abdul Ningi-led committee would also parley with the Inspector-General of Police, Mr. Mike Okiro.

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Speaker of the House of Representatives, Mr. Dimeji Bankole's directive came during Wednesday's plenary session.

The House had, last week, backed military action against the area, following a motion sponsored by John Halims Agoda (PDP, Delta).

In the motion, Mr Agoda sought a ceasefire of military bombings of the area to avoid more deaths of civilians.

But at the end of the debate, the lawmakers resolved that the military operations in Delta State should be extended to Rivers and Bayelsa States, both of which are in the delta.

The Speaker's directive to the ad-hoc committee came when Mr Agoda requested that the federal lawmakers should meet with the service chiefs and the police boss.

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