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## How soldiers tricked Bayelsa kidnap kingpin to surrender 14 fighters, killed all

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By Emma Amaize, Sam Oyadongha, Perez Brisibe and Chancel Sunday

TORU NDORO- TWENTY-EIGHT—year-old Bayelsa State -born kidnap kingpin and sea robber, Oyawerikumor Peregbabofa, self-styled “General” Kareowei, who attacked security formations, executed his victims, including soldiers at the slightest provocation in Delta and Bayelsa States, in the last few months, operated as if he was invincible, but when soldiers finally ensnared him, last week, he proved cowardly and tactless.



Felix Ewodaghe

## Shocker

Kareowei's notoriety and surefire actions sparked a lot of concerns in security circles, which made soldiers of Operation Delta Safe to express doubt when he surrendered, last Thursday, at Torugbene community in Delta state for the reason that his age call into question his spine-tingling daring acts.

It was the incredulity that made the authorities of Operation Delta Safe to mandate the spearhead of the troops that captured him in Delta to take him to Toru Ndoro in Bayelsa, where community leaders know him better to authenticate his nomenclature.

Nobody who saw the pocket-sized ebony creature would easily believe that he was the one that carried out deadly exploits associated with Kareowei in the region, particularly the demonstrated outmaneuvering of soldiers at a military checkpoint in Ogbogbabene, country home of former Minister of Niger Delta, Elder Godsdag Orubebe, in Delta State, July, last year, where a soldier was killed and a General Purpose Machine Gun, GPMG, carted away.

The criminal, who cut off the head of a military intelligence officer, not a Department of State Service, DSS, operative, as re-counted, penultimate

Wednesday, and ran rings with the blood-soaked head, was later slaughtered with 14 of his boys like chickens. Unquestionably, his instinct and magic failed him when it mattered most.

### Booby-trap

An insider familiar with how he was “wasted” told NDV: “Kareowei, who gunned down four soldiers in a bloody creek battle was days after the encounter begging the military he outwitted yet again to spare his life.”

“What happened was that he ran out of ammunition and was badly wounded on his leg and shoulder. So he fled to Torugbene for treatment and when the reality of the end dawned on him, he was begging for amnesty, the same treaty that ex-militant leader and member of the Delta Waterways and Land Security Committee, Bonny Gawei and the military intelligence officer that he guillotined, visited his camp to consummate, second to last Wednesday.

“At his tether’s end in Torugbene where he finally capitulated with his hands upstretched, the military played along with him and even talked him into believing that he would be granted amnesty with his boys if they turned in their weapons,” he disclosed.

However, how Kareowei, who cut off a soldier’s head, killed four others in a space of six days supposed that livid soldiers, who razed houses, molested innocent villagers and laid siege to waterways in Delta and Bayelsa states in search of him would accommodate his entreaty beats reasoning, but he fell for it.

### Outfoxing the fox

The source said: “The military arrested and navigated the waters straightaway, but made a U-turn at Ogbobagbene waterfront. Reason was that some of the officers had reservations about his identity because of his youthfulness. After

many inquiries, they took him back to Toru Ngoro to check his persona. The top military officers went back in the convoy that waited to see Kareowe at Ogbobagbene community.

“After validating his identity at Toru Ngoro community, security operatives interrogated him on why he had been terrorizing the creeks and he told them that it was because he wanted amnesty. They asked him if he had followers and he answered in the affirmative.

14 fighters seized, 2 evasive

“They asked him how many they were, he said 16. He was asked to call them to come for the disarmament process right away in the community. In the presence of soldiers, he made series of calls and 14 of his boys materialized in the community and surrendered their weapons to the military.

“Two of his men, however, smelt a rat and refused to come. The 14 that came did not suspect something fishy, but they trusted the judgment of their master, who spoke as everything was under control, hence they responded to his call.

“At the time they assembled, it was late in the day and the soldiers, who displayed admirable know-how and native intelligence by deluding Kareowe that he and his boys were actually going to be granted amnesty, pulled a bombshell, rounded them up and shot all of them dead on the spot,” he said.

What I saw- eyewitness

A villager, who witnessed the bloodbath told NDV: “Twelve bodies were thrown right into the river in front of my house, while the remaining four bodies, including Kareowe’s were taken away.”

They ambushed soldiers- OPDS

Giving the military account of how Kareowei and his boys died, Coordinator, Joint Media Campaign Centre, Operation Delta Safe, Major Ibrahim Abdullahi, asserted: “After his arrest, Karowei confessed to several criminal acts and led troops to his camp to recover the cache of arms and ammunition in his possession as well as to persuade other members of his gang to surrender.”

“However in a twist of events, Karowei’s recalcitrant group laid an ambush and attacked Task Force troops in a gun battle at his camp deep in the forest. This was in a bid to rescue Karowei from the troops.

“The superior firepower, resilience and gallantry of the troops countered this snap attack, which resulted in the death of several of Karowei’s henchmen and the king pin, Karowei who tried to flee to rejoin his cohorts.

Elusive duo captured

The two, who escaped death, allegedly came to the village after the bloodbath, but the villagers rounded them up and handed them to security agents.

Question for OPDS

Before he capitulated, Kareowei knew that his time was up and made frantic phone calls to top politicians and security officials, saying he was ready to lay down arms and accept amnesty.

Multiple sources told NDV that Kareowei was equipped by some prominent politicians and they were the ones he was calling to save his life. Top military officers also knew that he was connected.

Shortly after his arrest, Bayelsa state governor, Seriake Dickson and the former governor of the state, Timpre Sylva, both leaders of PDP and APC, in the state

were engaged in a war of words with Dickson accusing the latter's party of being behind the dishonorable criminal.

Though the military maintained that Kareowei was killed when his boys waylaid own troops when they went to his camp, few persons bought the story and the question many are asking is: "Since Kareowei submitted himself and soldiers ingeniously hoodwinked him to surrender 14 other combatants, why did the Operation Delta Safe not wait to investigate their sponsors and source of arms and ammunition, which would have gone a long way in cleansing the region of criminal godfathers and lawbreakers like them."



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