

Slain soldier: Rivers community wails as troops lay siege

●Operation'll continue till missing weapons are recovered — Army

By Davies
Iheamnachor

PORT HARCOURT—Men of the Nigerian Army have continued to lay siege to Bille community in Degema Local Government Area of Rivers State, following the alleged killing of their colleague in the area.

It was gathered a military man was killed around Bille territory on Friday by suspected pirates that terrorise the area.

However, on Tuesday, armed soldiers on reprisal, invaded the community. They arrested youths and broke into houses.

Yesterday, the military continued its operation, a development Vanguard gathered has sent many youths and men fleeing the community.

Chairman of Bille Kingdom Chiefs Council, Bennett Okpoki, cried that Bille Kingdom was under siege by the military, calling for the urgent intervention of the Federal Government.

Okpoki said Bille has been at the mercy of sea pirates, recalling that on Friday, a Port Harcourt-bound boat was attacked and one Mr. Impaisimba Igani killed.

He noted that the matter was also reported to the 29th Battalion Tactical Headquarters of the Nigerian Army resident in the area, wondering why the military would launch attack on the people, knowing the operations of pirates in the area.

Okpoki said the same criminals had also attacked the military formation and had gun battle with the soldiers, regretting the invasion by the soldiers.

He said: "Bille, a town in Degema council of Rivers State is under siege by the Nigerian military. Since 7 a.m., on Tuesday, my people have been under siege, as there are gun shots everywhere by the military."

"The palace of the Amayanabo of Bille was also invaded and the king, HRM LN.C Herbert and his personal aide, Mr. Damiete Alabo, taken away by the military."

"The military later released the king but left with the personal aide in the company of several others that were arrested. Until this moment, their whereabouts are unknown."

"On Tuesday, dozens of soldiers believed to be of the Nigerian Army stormed Bille Town, Headquarters of the Bille Kingdom in many gun boats, broke into houses, shooting sporadically, and many persons injured, alleging that Bille people were responsible for the reported clash with the supposed men in

military uniform. Upon that, the King, Amayanabo of Bille Kingdom was ordered to produce the suspects within 48 hours."

The fear-stricken people wondered why the army was attacking innocent community people over the actions of criminal, noting that it was becoming a regular practice in the region.

He called on the Federal Government, the state government and particularly the Chief of Defence Staff to urgently intervene to curb sea piracy in the area as well ensure release of those arrested by the soldiers in the operation.

Operation'll

Surveillance contract: A'Ibom host communities, Ijaw, Ogulagha elders back Tompolo

By Jimita
Onoyume &
Chioma Onuegbu

GAS Pipeline Host Communities Forum, Akwa Ibom State, has described the award of pipeline surveillance contract to former militant leader, Government Ekpemupolo alias Tompolo by the Federal Government as a welcome development.

Also, Izon Okosu-Otu (Izon Council of Elders) in Delta State, has flayed attack on Tompolo over the pipeline surveillance contract, describing those behind the attack as enemies of Niger Delta.

This came as the leadership and members of Ogulagha Elders Synod from oil-rich Ogulagha Kingdom, Burutu Local Government Area, Delta State, hailed President Muhammadu Buhari for awarding Tompolo's firm the pipeline surveillance contract.

The host communities of East Horizon Gas Company Limited in Akwa Ibom State, speaking through the Coordinator, Gas Pipeline Host Communities Forum, Akwa Ibom State, Kufre Emmanson, appreciated the Federal Government for finding Tompolo fit to handle oil and gas pipeline surveillance in Niger Delta.

Emmanson assured that the youths of gas pipeline communities in the state would always support Tompolo to succeed in the job to guard the pipelines from being vandalised.

He also called on Tompolo to consult with the Paramount Rulers in the state, stressing that the royal fathers from oil and gas communities

continue till missing weapons are recovered

—Army

Meanwhile, the spokesman of the 6 Division of the Nigerian Army, Port Harcourt, Major Iweha Ikedichie, said the military was in the area on a cordon and search operation, following an attack on soldiers and carting away of some weapons.

Iweha said: "Our soldiers in the early hours of Tuesday, carried out a cordon and search operation, which is ongoing following the killing of soldiers, who were on internal security operations around Bille community in Degema council of Rivers State, with their weapons

carted away.

"So, the operation is currently ongoing and will continue until the weapons of the soldiers are recovered. We solicit members of the community to please volunteer to give information that will lead us to the actual perpetrators of the crime, so that they will be brought to book."

"Usually, when incidences like this happen, criminals will hide in innocent communities and will be crying wolves. About the footage in the media on the conduct of the personnel involved, we will review all of those after the operation and take appropriate action."

"Currently, soldiers are out and the idea is to as quickly as possible recover the weapons and track the perpetrators."

would assist Tompolo to make proper selection of representatives from each of the oil and gas producing areas in the state.

His words: "The nine LGAs in Akwa Ibom State, consisting of Ukanafun, Etim Ekpo, Uyo, Uruan Abak, Oruk Anam, Ibesikpo Asutan, Etinan and Nsit Ibom, congratulate Tompolo for securing the pipeline surveillance contract in Niger Delta."

"We, therefore, call on the surveillance contractor, Tompolo to carry the host communities along and consult with the Paramount Rulers in Akwa Ibom State."

Tompolo's critics, enemies of N'Delta—Ijaw-elders

Addressing newsmen in Warri, Delta State, Chairman of Izon Okosu-Otu (Izon Council of Elders), Bare Etolor and the secretary, Fred Anisah wondered why critics were silent over the multi billion dollar oil mining licences and oil blocks given to non Niger Deltans, stressing that it was obvious that the attacks on Tompolo were sponsored by enemies of Niger Deltans bent on promoting disunity in the region.

"Again, the present contract is awarded to about three other companies, yet only the fraction to Tompolo has become an issue for protest."

"As Niger Deltans, the question is: why are the multi billion dollar oil mining licences and oil blocks gifted to only non Niger Deltans always overlooked by our seasonal agitators calling for the heavens to fall over the Tompolo little contract?"

"This is not ordinary, it seems to be the handiwork of our perennial

Niger Delta enemies, who are hell bent on seeing that we are never united."

Ogulagha elders back Tompolo

Chairman, Ogulagha Elders Synod, Firstman Ingla, said they were elated over the contract.

His words: "As we celebrate with our son, who Federal Government has found worthy to carry out the important assignment of oil pipeline surveillance, I want to make it clear without any iota of doubt that Tompolo is conversant with the creeks where oil theft is prevalent."

He said all stakeholders would liaise with the leaders of host communities, including royal fathers to ensure that the surveillance job is done to yield positive result for the nation.

2023: Atiku-Oki —Spokesman,

By Festus Ahon

ASABA—NEWLY appointed presidential spokesman for the Peoples Democratic Party, PDP, Mr Charles Aniagwu, yesterday, said, Atiku Abubakar and his running mate, Ifeanyi Okowa, would be truthful to Nigerians on what they would do to rescue the country in 2023 unlike those who lied to the people in 2015 and 2019.

Aniagwu, who briefed newsmen in Asaba, expressed hope that former President Olusegun Obasanjo would support the Abubakar and Okowa presidential ticket, saying the God who led him to support Abubakar in 2019 would also lead