

Attacks on Nigerian oil installations are the work of a terrorist group, GSPC in Nigeria

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SECURITY agencies in the country may have been placed on red alert following an alarm raised by the Federal Government that it had uncovered a 10,000-man terrorist organisation in the Niger Delta region whose motive is to disrupt Nigeria's oil production by kidnapping and killing oil workers.

Government also expressed concern over the activities of an Algerian terrorist group, the Salafist Group For Preaching and Combat (GSPC), believed to be affiliates to the dreaded Al-Qaeda, which it said has recruited and trained many Nigerians on destructive and sabotage acts against the country's interests.

Director-General of the National Intelligence Agency, Ambassador Uche Okeke, who made the revelations in Abuja, disclosed that these groups were being sponsored by foreigners in connivance with wealthy individuals within the country who mean Nigeria no good.

He told Sunday Vanguard: "Though some people might dispute this, the fact is that terrorist activities have been established in the Southern part of the country, particularly in relation to the activities of the Ijaw militants in the Niger Delta area. This area has remained volatile with incessant disruption of oil exploration activities, kidnapping and killing of oil workers."

"This group whose total strength is estimated at 10,000 is equipped with sophisticated weapons that facilitate its attacks against oil related targets especially oil installations in the area. But for the intervention of the federal government through dialogue, the situation would have been worse", the DG said, explaining, "How and where this group acquired its weapons is still a mystery and source of concern to government."

He disclosed that the recent spate of violence in Nigeria particularly in some Northern states like Yobe and Borno had underscored the reality of the presence of terrorist intentions against Nigeria.

"The fact that Nigeria was listed by Osama Bin Laden among five apostate states ripe for revolution also confirms our worst fears" the intelligence chief said and pointed out: "It is on record that out of these five states, Nigeria is the only country yet to experience a major attack by Al-Qaeda or its sympathizers."

“Furthermore, the activities of the Algerian terrorist group, the Salafist Group For Preaching and Combat (GSPC), in the Sahel countries of West Africa from Mauritania to Niger Republic and Nigeria are sources of concern to us”, Okeke said. It is instructive that three Nigerians were among the GSPC combatants captured by Chadian soldiers during an exchange of fire between Chadian forces and GSPC terrorists in April 2004. There were also some Nigerians among those killed by the Chadian troops”, he disclosed.

The NIA boss concluded: “You would recall that at least 17 people were killed in Yobe between December 2003 and January 2004 when the self styled Talibans, otherwise known as “Al-Sunna wal Jamma” attempted to impose what they called purification of Islam on the community where they set up their well fortified military styled camps.

The group also attacked two local government headquarters in Borno State in September 2004 causing death, destruction and pain to many people. These events are linked with international terrorism organizations, and there is evidence of foreign funding for the group.”

“You may also want to know that in December 2003, the NIA provided information about a planned terrorist attack on the MEGA PLAZA in Lagos, which is owned by an Israeli citizen. The Agency, the department of State Services and the Nigerian Police Force mobilized pre-emptive forces on receipt of the plan.”

“Though the attack did not take place most probably because of the presence of security operatives in and around the area, it shows that Nigeria is very vulnerable and could become target for terrorist attacks from international terrorists organizations.” Okeke disclosed that, “in July this year, operatives of the NIA interrogated one Al-Qaeda operative in Tripoli, Libya who confirmed that he was sent to Nigeria by the Al-Qaeda organization in late 2003 to arrange a number of targets for them.”

“He successfully concluded his assignment and sent his reports to his handlers in Afghanistan through a Nigerian he recruited before leaving the country in October 2004. The Nigerian was arrested by Pakistani authorities while trying to return to Nigeria having delivered the Al-Qaeda operatives work to their handlers”.