

News

Fight against galamsey...

Task force, illegal miners clash

• One miner dead, 100 arrested

By Kwadwo Baffoe Donkor, KUMASI

ONE person has been shot dead at Wawase, near Obuasi in the Ashanti Region, while more than 100 suspected illegal miners have been arrested by the National Anti-Galamsey Task Force, one week after it began operations to clamp down on illegal mining in the Ashanti, Western and Eastern regions.

The task force also seized 25 floating machines used to mine in water bodies.

The miners were arrested at mining sites in the Eastern, Ashanti and Western regions.

The task force, codenamed: Operation Vanguard, has processed some of the suspects to be arraigned in due course.

The identity of the deceased is yet to be established.

In an interview with the *Daily Graphic*, the Spokesman for the task force, Major Gariba Pabi,

said the miner was shot dead last Sunday evening when a section of the task force deployed to Obuasi came under attack from some suspected illegal miners.

Attack

He said the illegal miners pelted some members of the task force with stones in an attempt to scare them from pursuing their legitimate mission.

Some of the members of the task force are said to have been shot at by the miners, a situation which compelled the latter to return fire, leading to the death of the suspected illegal miner.

He said the circumstances that led to the death of the miner at Wawase were unfortunate and regrettable, but he was quick to add that the incident would not dampen the spirit of the members of the task force in fighting against illegal mining.

Major Pabi said since the deployment of the team to the Ashanti Region, "we have been gathering intelligence and meeting with opinion leaders to announce our presence and prepare the ground for a smooth operation".

According to him, because of the threat that was issued by a group of illegal miners to resist the operation, "we did not want to

do anything that might lead to clashes and loss of lives".

He said the Wawase incident was unfortunate, as the team had no option but to protect some of its members when they came under attack last Sunday.

Identification

Meanwhile, the body of the deceased has been deposited at the AngloGold Ashanti Hospital, while the police continue with their investigations into the matter.

Major Pabi expressed gratitude to some people in the communities who had been providing information for the task force in the execution of its work.


Background

A national anti-galamsey task force comprising 400 soldiers and policemen was set up by the government to fight against illegal mining.

The task force was deployed to the Eastern, Ashanti and Western regions on July 31, 2017.

Illegal mining has caused extensive damage to water bodies and the environment, a development that has prompted civil society groups, the Media Coalition Against Galamsey and the government to condemn the practice and begin a campaign against it.

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• Some members of the task force ready to be deployed at the launch of Operation Vanguard in Accra last week

