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Six killed in Cameroon oil platform attack: security source



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– Wed Nov 17, 12:33 pm ET



AFP/File – Residents of Bakassi ride in a boat in 2006. Six people were killed in an overnight attack on an oil ...

YAOUNDE (AFP) – Six people were killed in an overnight attack on an oil platform off Cameroon's disputed Bakassi peninsula claimed by a rebel group, a security source said Wednesday.

The dead were three members of Cameroon's Rapid Intervention Battalion, two Cameroonian civilians and one of the attackers, while several people were wounded, the source said.

The assault between midnight and 3:00 am (2300 GMT Tuesday and 0200 Wednesday) was claimed by Africa Marine Commando (AMC), an obscure group responsible for kidnappings in September and the

previous March.

The Perenco oil company said it was the operator of the Moudi offshore terminal, located in the Gulf of Guinea near Cameroon's borders with Nigeria and Equatorial Guinea.

"Perenco can confirm that a security incident occurred last night in the area of the Moudi FSO, offshore Cameroon, involving army personnel and security contractors," a statement on its website said.

"The incident, which is currently being investigated, tragically led to the deaths of five Cameroonian personnel, three from the Rapid Intervention Battalion (BIR), a national defence force involved in the security of offshore oil and gas installations, and two civilian security contractors."

The statement added, "Perenco extends its deepest sympathies to the families of those killed."

The company "is currently lending all the support it can to the Cameroon authorities at this sad time and will provide further information as and when appropriate," it said.

According to its website the Perenco Group began operations in the oil and gas industry in 1975, as a marine services company based in Singapore. It has been operating in Cameroon since 1993.

The AMC's last reported action was an attack on three vessels moored off Cameroon's port city and main business centre of Douala on September 12, when six foreigners were abducted.

The six men -- a Croatian, a Filipino and four Ukrainians -- were released on September 30 after being held hostage.

Cameroonian officials said they were freed in Cameroonian territory by that country's troops, but another source said they were freed by Nigerian forces in neighbouring Nigeria.

The AMC had called for the release of "its fighters arrested and detained at the Buea prison" in southwest Cameroon.

The group first came to public notice when it claimed responsibility for the kidnapping last March of seven Chinese fishermen off the Bakassi peninsula, which is rich in fish stocks and believed to have substantial oil reserves.

Reportedly held for a ransom of 15,000 dollars, the Chinese men were freed by Cameroonian security forces five days after they were taken captive, according to Cameroonian authorities.

The Bakassi peninsula was at the centre of a territorial dispute between Nigeria and Cameroon for 15 years. It was handed to Cameroon in August 2008 after the International Court of Justice ruled in Cameroon's favour.

The marshy coastal region has recently witnessed a spike in rebel attacks. Ten oil sector workers including seven French were kidnapped there in late 2008 by a group calling itself the Bakassi Freedom Fighters.

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