

JTF kills 2 militants

GUNMEN attacked a Nigerian oil installation Thursday but were repulsed by troops who killed two of the assailants, the military said.

Soldiers also recovered three assault rifles from the militants, who attacked the pipeline interchange, said Lt. Col. Sagir Musa, a spokesman for the military task force charged with securing the restive southern Niger Delta.

Musa told foreign media sources that two militants died in the attack but gave no further details.

Shell only confirmed an incident involving staff of its local joint venture, saying gunmen attacked maintenance workers in the area, drawing a response from a nearby security patrol.

Shell made no mention of attackers hitting the facility, or causing any damage.

The area's most potent militant group did not immediately reply to questions seeking confirmation of its involvement in the attack on a so-called flow station.

Militants have stepped up their activities in the past few months as one of their supposed leaders is tried on terrorism and treason charges for allegedly trafficking in illegal weapons.

The militants have focused their efforts on sabotaging the nation's vast expanse of oil pipelines carrying crude oil from wells to central switching stations and onto export terminals.

Pipeline bombings in the last few months have cut oil production, and drop in supplies and the unrest in Nigeria have contributed to the sharp rise in international oil prices.