

# Bloody!

—Page 41

## Militants kill 11 soldiers

• *Not true — JTF*  
• *Shell shuts down*

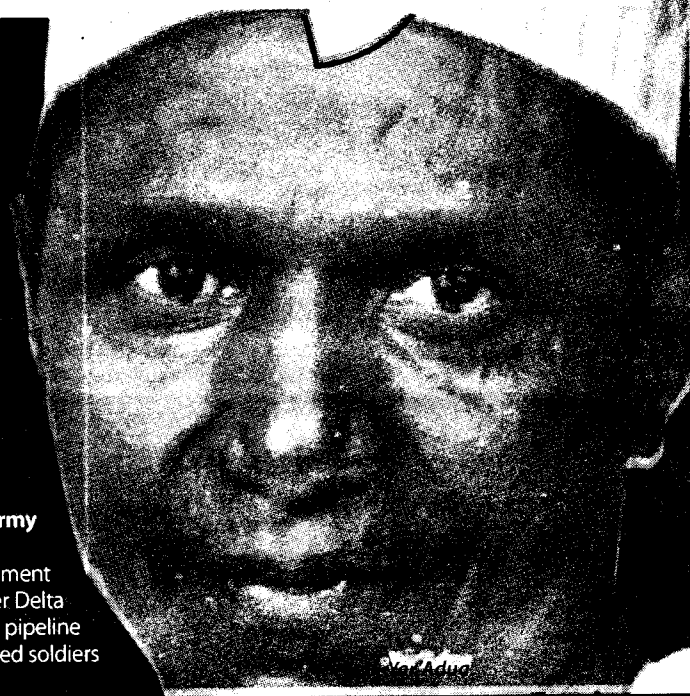
TONY ITA ETIM, Port Harcourt, and  
DENNIS NAKU, Yenagoa (with agency reports)

**NIGER** Delta militants said they marked the first anniversary of the administration of President Umaru Musa Yar'Adua and Vice-President Goodluck Jonathan with the killing

of 11 government soldiers, a death toll the Army authorities immediately refuted.

A Reuters wire report quoted the anti-government militants, Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND) saying they had blown up a Royal Dutch Shell pipeline at Awoba flow station in southern Rivers State and killed soldiers

*Continues on page 6*



•Continued from Page 1

soldiers in a fight yesterday.

The Nigerian Army denied losing any men.

"Today's attack is dedicated to the administration of President Yar'Adua and Vice President Jonathan who have failed after one year in office to ensure peace, security and reconciliation in the Niger Delta region," the militants said.

Meanwhile Shell has shut down some of its production lines in reaction to the attack on its facility.

The military authorities initially denied that there had been an attack but later confirmed there had been a blast early yesterday at a Shell facility which was not guarded by soldiers. "The cause of the explosion has not yet been determined but it was strongly suspected that explosives might have been used by miscreants," Lt. Col. Sagir Musa, military spokesman in Rivers State said.

Lt Col. Musa said troops had been sent to the site of the blast but denied that 11 soldiers in a military gunboat had been killed in a shoot-out. The Niger Delta is home to the world's eighth-biggest oil industry, exporting about 2.1 million barrels per day, but militants have led a campaign of sabotage since early 2006 to push demands for greater local control over oil revenues, otherwise called resource control.

The unrest has depressed Nigeria's oil output by around a fifth since then, helping to push world oil prices to record high. Oil rose above \$133 a barrel yesterday after striking a record high of \$135.09 last week. Reports of the militants' attack in Nigeria, also helped to boost prices.

Light, sweet crude for July delivery on the New York Mercantile Exchange was up 98 cents at \$133.17 a barrel in electronic trading by afternoon in Europe. The contract rose to \$1.38 to settle at \$132.19 a barrel on Friday.

In London, July Brent crude futures rose to \$1.13 to \$132.70 a barrel on the ICE Futures exchange.

The dollar has weakened over the last week after a modest recovery, and investors will be watching economic data out of the United States to be released over the next few days for further clues about the health of the world's biggest economy.

"The dollar's been swinging

## Bloody

down again," said Mark Pervan, senior commodity strategist at Australia & New Zealand Bank in Melbourne, and that's "going to sway sentiment."

Oil and other hard commodities were seen as hedges against a weakening dollar and inflation. Also, a weak dollar, the currency of international oil trade, makes petroleum products less expensive to Asian and European buyers.

This week, investors will be watching for what implications U.S. consumer confidence, new home sales, gross domestic product and other economic data might have for the dollar and oil prices, he said.

"It's a pretty price sensitive week for economic data," Pervan said. "The data we're seeing out of the U.S. at the moment looks pretty weak. You'd expect that trend to continue, pushing further down on the dollar."

The dollar, one of the factors that has fed oil's rally from about \$65 a year ago, was lower against the yen, but up a bit against the euro in currency trading during the afternoon in Europe after losing ground Friday in New York.

The euro slipped to \$1.5764 compared with \$1.5775 on Friday, while the dollar fell to 103.41 Japanese yen from 104.17 yen Friday.

Attacks on oil installations and the kidnapping of oil industry workers have continued in the region, with MEND last week accusing the government of "insincerity" in its handling of the situation.

Shell was forced to shut in about 164,000 barrels per day of Bonny Light crude production — or about 40 percent of the Anglo-Dutch major's equity oil output in Nigeria — late last month due to attacks.

The company has been restoring some of the shut-in production but a *force majeure* (unexpected and disruptive event) remains in place for Bonny Light exports, meaning it cannot guarantee to meet its contract commitments.

MEND, however, in a *volte face* yesterday dissociated self from the plot to blow up oil pipelines in Bayelsa State.

MEND's spokesman in Bayelsa State, Comrade Joshua Macaiva, who disclosed this in an electronic mail obtained by *Daily*

*Champion* in Yenagoa, described the development as false, saying it was not the true reflection of its struggle to enthrone a regime of peace and development in the delta.

Macaiva who was reacting to recent newspaper reports (not *Daily Champion*) that his group, had threatened attack oil facilities in the state said it was blown out of proportion; just as he admitted to a recent peace deal with the state government so as to allow the state and Federal Government to implement some of the programmes meant to alleviate the sufferings of the Niger Delta.

*Daily Champion* recalls that MEND had threatened to destroy oil pipelines in the state over two weeks ago, and called on construction firm, Daewoo Nigeria Limited, and other companies operating in the state to leave in their own interest.

It also accused the Federal Government of enriching some individuals and groups in the name of peace initiatives in the oil region.

*Daily Champion* learnt that the MEND leader met with the State Chairman of the Peace and Conflict Resolution Committee, Chief James Jeftha, last week over the issue, during which he stated with emphasis that those who issued the threat misconstrued his position and promised the state government that he would keep faith with the peace deal.

Part of the statement reads, "The position of the MEND on the issue of development and inclusion in the region was blown out of proportion and completely misrepresents the group's position on the Niger Delta struggle."

"The state government has so far demonstrated that it is serious about the promises made in the cease-fire agreement and is in constant touch with us through the Niger Delta Peace and Conflict Resolution Committee," Macaiva said.

SPDC spokesman, Mr. Precious Okologo, who confirmed an attack on their Awoba Flow Station in Degema Local Government Area of Rivers State, said, "We have also shut in some production to stop further spill."

"SPDC can confirm that an attack on Nembe Creek Trunkline at Awoba in the Eastern operations. An overfly this morning showed some oil had spilled into the environment; we have mobilized equipment to

combating the menace have not been effective.

Managing Director of PPMC, Mr. Reg Stanley, had proposed directional drilling as the reliable option to make the pipeline deeper and impossible to reach by the powerful syndicates that thrive on products stolen from the pipeline.

He said the new lines would by pass all the marked locations where incidents of vandalism are high and other likely areas where the thieves who usually use barges and haulage tankers to evacuate large volume of products siphoned from sections of the pipeline.

•Continued from Page 1

number of people who elected him debunked the claims that he is responsible for the needs of public office holders in the state. He said the office of the Secretary to the State Government (SSG) was in charge of such needs.

Obi said that his deputy being human is bound to make mistakes but reiterated that he would continue to work cordially with her as she remains his deputy. He said that he respect her office, and would continue to be working cordially with everybody in Anambra as that remains his cardinal goal.

Said he: "On the allegation that the deputy governor's overhead was unduly delayed, money for the overhead cost of all government officers, the governor, the deputy governor, the SSG, commissioners, ministries are paid simultaneously on the same date. There is no difference in payment dates. As a matter of fact, it is contained in the same paper and paid by the office of the Account General."

"If there was anytime my office or any other office was paid an hour earlier than the deputy governor, I will offer my resignation. My policy of monthly payment is that pensioners must be paid first, followed by civil servants before political appointees. This remains sacrosanct."

"The House of Assembly discussed this with me and I told them the same thing, I thank them for their understanding."

•Continued from Page 6

by a recent resolution of the House empowered to raise such committee.

According to him leadership of the House was still shopping for those who would serve in the panel and that the list of the members would be made public as soon as possible.

Sources, however, said that the speaker would rather continue with his waiting game than to name the committee members now.

The speaker was alleged to have told the president in a meeting recently that it would be hasty to commence the review and that doing so now would re-enact the sad scenario that nearly truncated the democracy in 2006.

The Speaker at the meeting attended by some principal officers of the House, had allegedly told the president that he would need more time to constitute the review panel and would want the exercise to be delayed to enable the present administration further stabilize.

Source alleged that the meeting which was at the instance of the speaker was to specifically brief the president on the planned review exercise.

Meanwhile more knocks came for the former governor of Jigawa state Senator Saminu Turaki over his campaign for tenure elongation for Yar'Adua.

There were indications yesterday that the Senate

•Continued from Page 6

Products Marketing Company (PPMC), the downstream unit of the corporation.

Spokesman for the company, Mr. Ralph Ugwu, told *Daily Champion* that the victims, whose names were not given, sustained different degrees of burns from the fire, and were promptly rushed to an undisclosed hospital for treatment.

"No life was lost," he said.

He said the gun duel started when the security men attempted to arrest pipeline vandals who had broken the conduit line to steal fuel.

He added that vandals had

## Explosion

sustained bullet wounds.

Minister of State for Petroleum, Mr. Odein Ajumogobia, who was in Lagos for a different purpose when the news of the incident broke, described it as unfortunate and expressed discomfort at the continued activities of fuel thieves in the country.

It would be recalled that pipeline fire incidents caused by vandals that target petroleum products for economic gains have caused the death of over 4000 people in the country, and all efforts of the government in

Continued from Page 6