

# Militants blow up Agip pipeline

DENNIS NAKU, Yenagoa,

TWO soldiers of the Joint Military Taskforce (JTF) are feared dead after engaging daredevil militants in a shootout at a creek in Obioku community, Nembe local government area of Bayelsa State, yesterday morning.

The militants, who carried out the attack, claimed to have later launched an offensive at a pipeline owned by Italian oil major, Nigeria Agip Oil Company (NAOC), in Nembe.

Although the JTF confirmed yesterday that militants attempted to attack a facility belonging to NAOC, it said the attempt failed as "the militants, who came in five speedboats, were given a good fight by the soldiers because they had intelligence reports before the arrival of the militants."

Spokesman of the force, Col. Rabe Abubakar, acknowledged that there was a "very serious attack" on a community called Obioku which hosts NAOC facility in Bayelsa, but however said nothing happened to the facility of the Italian firm and that there was no casualty on the side of the military because it was

## **-Kill 2 soldiers -It's untrue- JTF**

more prepared.

But authorities of the Italy's largest oil company said it had to close an oil pipeline supplying the Brass export terminal after it came under the armed attack.

The lost output totals 33,000 barrels a day, of which 16,000 belong to Eni, the company said in an e-mailed statement yesterday.

The Agip official couldn't immediately say whether the attack would cause a suspension of contractual delivery obligations.

The statement said the pipeline was attacked at about 3 a.m. yesterday by "heavily armed" fighters, and production was "immediately shut off" after "an act of sabotage occurred on line 24 of the Ogida Manifold-Brass Terminal" located in the Niger Delta.

Agip last year produced an average daily production of 122,000 barrels of oil and gas equivalent in Nigeria, according to the company's 2008 Fact Book.

The attack on the coastal settlement, *Saturday Champion*

however learnt, was carried out by militants of the Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND) operating from one of the camps overlooking the Atlantic fringe within Southern Ijaw and the Brass territorial waters.

A source said the exchange of gun fire was sparked when the armed youths shot sporadically into the community and attempted to disarm the soldiers stationed at a nearby jetty at the serene coastal settlement, during which two of the soldiers were reportedly felled.

The military base was mounted in the area since 2005 after a bloody inter-communal conflict between Obioku and neighbouring Odioma community in Nembe coastal area.

The incident allegedly occurred when the militants were coming back from a social gathering.

Meanwhile, villagers in the community have started fleeing the area for fear of reprisal attacks, following invasion by JTF troops shortly after the shootout, which lasted about an hour, our source

claimed.

Unconfirmed reports say a section of the community has been razed down following the incident.

But claiming responsibility for the two attacks, MEND, in an email to our correspondent yesterday, said "A major pipeline, which delivers crude oil to the Brass export terminal, was blown up at the Nembe creek in Bayelsa state this morning (Friday), June 19, 2009 at about 0300hrs by heavily armed fighters from the Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND)."

"The pipeline belongs to Agip."

"We want to use this opportunity to ask members of the public around the Bonny and Port Harcourt axis to watch the video of the extra judicial killing by the JTF of one Boma and his brother on YouTube to help trace the family and friends so as to reveal the perpetrators of the criminal act, who the JTF are covering for."

"If soldiers who are supposed to protect civilians harass, rape and kill them, then they should be exposed. We know that the military still has a few good God fearing men, who may recall the incident when the men were shot on a jetty where the JTF gunboats are docked. Please come forward and expose the killers amongst you," MEND pleaded.

# Robbers kill 2 policemen in Benin

VINCENT ADEKOYE, Senior Correspondent, Benin

IT was another black Friday for officers and men of Edo state Police Command, yesterday, as daredevil armed robbers killed two policemen attached to the command in Benin.

The sad development, which jolted the command led to an emergency security meeting, which source at the command said, was aimed at tackling the renewed crime rate in the state, specifically within the state capital.

It would be recalled that crime rate had increased the past few weeks, a situation some residents attributed to the invasion of the Niger Delta by the military, thereby forcing criminals in the hot Delta zone to relocate to Edo state.

Investigation indicated that the two policemen were on patrol at a spot in Idogbo, Ikpoba Okha local government area of the state when a five-man gang of robbers opened fire on them, killing two of them on the spot.

Report said other members of the police patrol team, who were taken by surprise, opened fire on the robbers, who fled to a nearby bush.

The two policemen hit by the robbers' bullets were later rushed to the Central Hospital in Benin, where doctors confirmed them dead.

Confirming the development, image maker of the command, Mr. Peter Ogboi, an assistant superintendent of police (ASP), disclosed that a team of the anti-riot policemen and men of the Special Anti Robbery Squad had been deployed to comb the bush with

a view to tracking down killers of the policemen, adding that the command will not be deterred in its determination to eradicate crime in the state.

According to him, police were able to recover one of the vehicles in which the robbers were operating when they attacked the police team, adding that efforts would be intensified to arrest the robbers and bring them to book.

It would be recalled that a joint military task force being proposed by the state government the past months was yet to take off.

According to the state deputy governor, Dr. Pius Odubu, who spoke to newsmen on the matter, take-off of the patrol team was being delayed by bureaucratic bottleneck from the federal government.

# NASU begins strike

DELE OGUNYEMI, Ibadan

A major crisis looms on campuses of the nation's ivory towers as the Non-Academic Staff Union of Nigerian Universities (NASU) embarks on a week long warning strike beginning Monday.

The impending strike action of NASU will also affect Federal Colleges of Education, nationwide, it was reliably gathered in Ibadan, yesterday.

Already, leadership of the Academic Staff Union of Nigerian Universities (ASUU) are meeting this weekend at the Federal University of Technology, Akure (FUTA), for a three-day National Executive Council meeting of the union to review its stand on their strike action over failure of