

# Niger Delta militants attack military patrol boat

**G**unmen in seven speedboats attacked a Nigerian armed forces patrol boat in Rivers state and kidnapped one officer, security sources said.

Four other troops in the patrol boat managed to get away during the attack which took place near Okrika, an island on the outskirts of Port Harcourt, according to three security experts working for oil companies in the delta.

Nigerian army and navy spokesmen said they had no information about the incident, while a spokesman for the joint armed forces unit that is in charge of security in Rivers could not be reached.

Militancy and crime flourish in the lawless Niger Delta, where many people live without electricity, clean

for the constitution of the country because, "they are fun of trampling on the provision of the

**By Jibrin Abubakar, with  
agency report**

water or paved roads alongside Africa's biggest oil industry.

Nigerian troops are regarded by many residents as agents of a corrupt and neglectful state and they are frequent targets of attacks.

In the village of Ekiugbo in Delta state west of Rivers, troops conducted a house-to-house search on Sunday for the suspected killers of a soldier and a civilian driver working for an oil company. They were shot dead on Friday.

"There are outlaws there who were responsible for the killings. A force has been there since yesterday to maintain order and make sure that these criminal activities do not occur again," said Alfred Ilogho, commander of a joint armed forces unit responsible for security in the western delta.

One resident of Ekiugbo said troops had been

dragging people out of their homes, beating them up and forcing them to "frog-jump", or squat and hop. He said the soldiers had burnt at least one house in the village.

"We are in a state of tension here. They have virtually overrun the community. Some people have been dragged out and made to frog-jump because the soldiers said they were being stubborn," said the resident, who did not wish to be named.

Attacks on the security forces often draw retaliation and confrontations like the one at Ekiugbo are quite common in the delta. This is one of the reasons why the security forces are so unpopular and the vast wetlands region is so hard to police.

The armed forces are unable to control the delta's thousands of mangrove-lined waterways and are often outgunned by militias. Attacks on oil facilities,

kidnappings for ransom and theft of crude oil are all common.

It was not clear if the abduction of the officer in Rivers was the work of ransom-seekers or of rebels seeking to press political demands. Okrika is a stronghold of a well-known local militia but there was no immediate claim of responsibility.

Five Chinese telecom workers were kidnapped in a different part of Rivers on Friday and are still missing.

Separately, the rebel Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND) is still holding captive three Italians and one Lebanese employed by Italian oil company Agip who were kidnapped on December 7.

The MEND, which wants local control of oil assets and reparations to communities for pollution and neglect, said in an email to *Reuters* it was not involved in Sunday's attack.