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Gunmen kidnap four expatriates, kill cop

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Armed men have kidnapped three Syrians and a Lebanese man working in the construction sector in Rivers State, killing a policeman in the attack, police said yesterday. "About 10 or more kidnappers, all armed with automatic weapons, fired many rounds. The hoodlums kidnapped four expatriate workers, three Syrians and one Lebanese," police spokeswoman Rita Abey was quoted as having told foreign news service. "They were working on a construction site in Rivers State," she said, adding that the kidnappings took place on Thursday. "One of our policemen attached to the company was killed by the hoodlums," she added.

The deceased, Sergeant Benedith Akoi of Mobile Police Unit (MOPOL) 6, Maiduguri, was attached to Micro Engineering Nigeria Limited, a road construction firm with office at No. 154, Tombia Street, Port Harcourt". The assailants escaped into nearby Abia State territory, she said. No group or individual has yet claimed responsibility for the kidnap and no ransom has been demanded so far, Abbey said.

Hundreds of mostly foreign and local oil workers have been kidnapped in the Niger Delta since 2006. Many have been released unharmed, and some were freed only after ransom payments. Both Rivers and Abia are states in the volatile oil-rich Niger Delta region, where most kidnappings have taken place in recent years. Initially, oil workers in the region were targeted for kidnapping but local politicians and their relatives have been increasingly targeted.

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