

Gunmen Kill Five Oil Workers, Kidnap Three Filipinos

FROM KELVIN EBIRI
(PORT HARCOURT)

FIVE contractors working for the Shell Petroleum Development Company (SPDL), were yesterday killed by a band of militants in the Egbema area of Imo State.

Another set of armed men also yesterday abducted three Filipino oil workers on their way to the Nigeria Liquefied Natural Gas (NLNG) in Bonny, Rivers State.

The deceased were said to have been on the staff of a company called SuryCom. The motive of the killing was not ascertained as at press time.

Yesterday's abduction came on the heels of the kidnap of a German working for another oil worker Bilfinger and Berger, in Port Harcourt the state capital, on Thursday.

The whereabouts of the four expatriates are unknown as none of the militant groups has claimed responsibility.

A source in Finima, Bonny, disclosed to *The Guardian* that the three Filipinos who work with Overseas Technical Services (OTS), a foreign contracting firm were going to work around 6.30 a.m. when a band of heavily armed men emerged from the forest and attacked them.

The names of the kidnapped Filipinos according to the Police spokesperson are Cornallio Falaria, Daniel Monleogundo and Alberto Torres.

The Guardian learnt that militants fired several bullets at the tyre of the bus conveying the Filipinos to work. Having demobilized the bus, the gunmen start-

ed shooting sporadically into the air. In the pandemonium that ensued, the gunmen dragged the hostages to a waiting speedboat and disappeared into the creeks.

Yesterday's kidnap, which occurred along the Liaison Road, close to the Monkey Village, a suburb of Finima, is the first of such incidents in the remote Bonny Island since the militants in the Niger Delta started their armed campaign. They are demanding an equitable distribution of the proceeds of the oil and gas revenue accruable to the Nigerian government.

A source in NLNG said the company was anxious to know who the kidnappers were and their motives. It was also learnt that relevant security

agencies had been contacted and they are frantically searching for the men.

Gunmen from the Old Bakana, in Degema Local Government Area of Rivers State, had on June 20, 2006, kidnapped two Filipinos at Aker Base jetty, Rumuolumeni. The men were released a week later after unspecified ransom was paid. This is the fourth reported case of kidnapping in Rivers State since June.

A source in one of the oil services company disclosed that the incident has rattled the expatriate community on the island. According to him, there is general anxiety in Bonny owing to the fact that the whereabouts of the German, who was taken hostage in Port Harcourt on Thursday, was still unknown.