

## How hostage was killed, by Ijaw leader

A TEAM of soldiers sighted some heavily armed men speeding off in a boat in the volatile Niger Delta region and came to only one conclusion: the men must be militants against whom a presidential order of "force-for-force" has just been issued.

So, the soldiers, as if on cue, opened fire on the armed men. The element of surprise is a most potent military weapon against the enemy.

The attack was effective. Eleven of the men in the boat were killed, while the others jumped into the sea and onto safety.

But not all the people on board were armed. Not all of them were militants.

One of the men felled was Nelson Ujeya, the Community Liaison Officer (CLO) of the Shell Petroleum Development Company (SPDC), a hostage who was being taken to freedom.

He had since August 8 been abducted by militants from Letugbene community in Ekereomor Local Government area of Bayelsa State.

Monday, August 21 was to

be his day of freedom. But it turned to be his last.

Exasperated by recurrent hostage-taking in the Niger Delta and its impact on the economy, President Olusegun Obasanjo had recently given an order for a military clampdown on militants in the area.

The president of the Ijaw Youth Council (IYC), Mr. Oyeinfie Jonjon, decried the military action, which he said led to the death of 10 men from his ethnic nationality and Ujeya, who is believed to be an Ogoni man in Rivers State.

The Advanced Congress of Democrats (ACD) yesterday condemned the government's resort to military option in resolving the Niger Delta crisis.

Jonjon, who was part of the negotiation team for the release of the Shell official, said that he was returning with the hostage and some other persons when the soldiers opened fire on them.

While describing the killing as highly provocative, the IYC president described the government shoot-on-sight order as a wrong approach to solving

*From Willie Etim, Yenagoa*

the security problem in the region.

His words: "The murdered Ijaw youths were only assisting the government and Shell to negotiate the successful release of the Shell official because of the company's inability to implement part of the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between it and the community."

He urged the Bayelsa State government to reach out to the families of the slain youths since their mission was to help the govern-

ment secure the release of the oil worker. He also called on the Federal Government to probe the killing of the youths.

Jonjon advised that unless such steps were promptly taken by the government, the situation could result in a further break-down of law and order in the Niger Delta region, which had been worsened by the shoot-on-sight order given the soldiers who were heavily drafted to the area.

He recalled that the inability of government to successfully investigate crimes in different parts of the country had resulted in the murder of innocent law-

abiding citizens and destruction of properties worth millions of naira.

"The recent political killings in the country confronting security agents are still begging for answers, but the crime committed by some few youths in the Niger Delta region in the past had resulted in the massive destruction of the lives and property of the people by armed security agents such as the case in Odi and Odioma", he noted.

The IYC president called on the government to halt "such reckless killings and destruction in the country and put its security agents

on a better pedestal to not only forestall crime but also investigate it by bringing to book according to the party's spokesman, Alhaji Lai Mohammed, only shows clearly that President Obasanjo "has run out of ideas in resolving the problem of this region."

The party said: "It also goes against the recent Niger Delta Human Development report according to the party's spokesman, Alhaji Lai Mohammed, only shows clearly that President Obasanjo "has run out of ideas in resolving the problem of this region."



**Police arrest primary, JSS pupils for armed robbery**