

# Militants Seize Two Italians, Kill Soldier

• Colleagues Retaliate,  
Raze Community

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FROM  
SUNNY OGEFERE  
(ASABA)  
KELVIN EBIRI  
(PORT HARCOURT)

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**V I O L E N C E**  
remained on the  
upbeat in Rivers State  
on Thursday as mili-  
tants and soldiers  
unleashed terror on  
innocent citizens.

The first victims of the crisis were two Italian oil workers of Saipem, who were kidnapped by suspected militants at a relaxation centre in Rumuolumeni in Obio-Akpor Local Council of the state. The militants were said to have killed a soldier and injured another both of who were in the area.

In anger, the other soldiers guarding the facility at Aker base, stormed a nearby settlement and razed its structures.

And in Asaba, Delta State, the State Security Services (SSS) yesterday paraded a man identified as Nicholas

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

# Militants Kill Soldier In Rivers

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

Dickson, described as the leader of a syndicate that abducted a Japanese working with Homan Engineering Company in Port Harcourt.

In the Rumuolumeni incident, *The Guardian* learnt, some persons were injured when the soldiers struck but there was no causality.

Meanwhile, one of the militant groups, the Movement of the Niger Delta People (MONDP), which last week released a German hostage, has resolved to cease all hostile action and urged the Federal Government to reconsider the option of military offensive as a solution to the crisis.

A source told *The Guardian* yesterday that the suspected militants dressed in army camouflage invaded the slum on Thursday night and proceeded to the place where the two expatriates were drinking in a bar.

As they attempted to abduct the Italians, the source said, an unarmed soldier, who had assumed that the kidnappers were members of the Joint Task Force on patrol con-

fronted them and was shot on the head. Another soldier, who attempted to escape from the scene, was also shot at by the armed fighters.

Amid the pandemonium that ensued, some of the militants absconded with the two oil workers while others engaged the soldiers guarding the Italian oil firm in gun battle. According to the Public Relations Officer of the 2nd Amphibious Brigade, Major Musa Sagir, who confirmed the killing of the soldier yesterday, the shooting attracted soldiers stationed at Saipem base, and a cross-fire between them and the kidnappers ensued.

"They were dressed in army camouflage and our men had mistaken them for soldiers but when the men realised they were kidnappers they engaged them in fierce fighting," Sagir said. "I can confirm that one of our men was shot died while another was injured. Heavy damage was also inflicted on the kidnappers. Our men injured about four of them and they lost four rifles, which were recovered."

Sagir further said that the injured militants

and their cohorts retreated to a nearby jetty where they had a waiting speedboat in which they escaped with the Italians.

As soon as the militants left, the infuriated soldiers proceeded to a nearby slum at Aker base and razed the place. Witnesses alleged that the soldiers bullied the residents, forcing most of them to flee that night.

When *The Guardian* visited the area yesterday, those whose property were not destroyed were seen parking their belongings for fear of another attack by the military.

The rash of kidnappings in Rivers State since June led to a two-day military offensive in parts of Port Harcourt last week and the militarisation of most of the oil companies in the state. The Army spokesman said if the oil companies were left without the soldiers, the militants would wreak havoc on their facilities.

In a 10-point statement made available to *The Guardian*, MONDP spokesman urged the government to immediately reconsider the option of "force for force" as its only response to the crisis in the Niger Delta.