

# Suspected militants kidnap foreign oil worker in Owerri

**I**NDICATIONS emerged yesterday that Niger Delta militants might have shifted their operational base to the hinter land as they kidnapped a Filipino national oil worker. The Filipino was a Shell sub-contractor.

Two mobile policemen attached to the oil worker are feared killed after the militants' fireworks. The militants, however, overpowered the cops taking their captive away, probably to Port Harcourt.

Unconfirmed report said the police officers were dead and their bodies deposited at a cottage hospital morgue near the airport but the Police Public Relations Officer (PPRO) in the state, Mr. Isa Bala Mohammed, denied the claim. He said they received report in the command that the officers are only injured and were receiving treatment in an undisclosed hospital. He, however, accepted that the militants took the oil worker away.

His words: "Information we got said that the militants actually took the oil worker away. The mobile policemen, we gathered in

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*From Charles Ogugbuaja,  
Owerri*

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the command were injured. They did not die. We were not told the hospital."

It was suspected that the militants trailed the oil worker from Port Harcourt where he had boarded a flight to Owerri.

It was gathered that it was the first time such incident took place at the Imo State capital, according to *Agency France Press (AFP)*.

The latest kidnapping brings to 30 the number of foreigners currently held hostage in southern Nigeria's oil-producing region. Twenty-four of the hostages are Filipinos who were seized from a cargo vessel, two of them are Italians and the remaining three are a Briton, an American and a Lebanese national.

Meanwhile, the Minister of State for Defence, Mr. Mike Onolememen has said that the Federal Government did not purchase any military hardware and weapons for the sole purpose of suppressing militants in the troubled oil-rich Niger Delta region.