

Militants bomb Jonathan's home, police command

IT was a 30-minute operation.

But by the time the dust cleared, two police officers lay dead and much of the country home of the Vice President-elect, Dr. Goodluck Jonathan, was in ruins.

A band of suspected militants, in the dead of the night, yesterday stormed Otieke Village in the Ogbia area of Bayelsa State in two speed-boats.

- **Six feared dead**
- **Attack is political, says VP-elect**

Their first port of call: The country home of Dr. Jonathan, who is also the governor of the state. They spent about 30 minutes there. They had arrived in the house at about 1.00 a.m.

The Vice President-elect was not at home, but his parents were. Miracu-

lously, the parents escaped unhurt. But two police officers – a corporal and an inspector – were reported dead.

Their thirst for human blood apparently not yet satisfied, the suspected

militants moved to the Ogbia Divisional Police Headquarters. With several explosives, they razed down a block of offices. There, four persons were feared dead.

No group has, however,

claimed responsibility for the attacks, which sent residents of the sleepy village scampering.

The names of the two police officers who died at the governor's home were unascertained as at press time. They were reported to have been in the house on routine duty. The security post of the governor's house was also torched by the suspected militants.

Jonathan, reacting to the incident shortly after declaring open a capacity-building workshop organised for defence correspondents in Yenagoa, the state capital yesterday, said that he regarded what happened in his country home as a very minor thing.

His words: "What happened in my country home at about 1.00 a.m.

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*From Willie Etim (Yenagoa) and
Kelvin Ebiri (Port Harcourt)*

Militants attack Jonathan's home

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is a very minor thing to me. It is political. That is the price I have to pay as a politician in the Niger Delta."

The state Police Commissioner, Mr. Julian Opkalake, confirmed that two police officers died during the attack.

He also confirmed that the parents of the Vice President-elect were not touched during the attack.

Though no group has claimed responsibility for it, the Police have said that the attack could have come from one of the militants operating in the region.

The spokesperson of the Movement for the Emancipation of Niger Delta (MEND), Jomo Gbomo, in a one sentence e-mail message to *The Guardian*, distanced his group from the attack.

He said: "We can never be involved in such senseless attack."

Prominent Ijaw groups have condemned the attack. The Ijaw National Congress (INC) president, Prof. Kimse Okoko, told *The Guardian* that the incident was uncalled for as the people of the Niger Delta had no reason to attack the person of the governor.

Okoko who described the attack as unfortunate and highly regrettable, added that the INC is disturbed by the recent spate of violence in the Niger Delta and has called for restraint.

"We are worried about the growing level of violence that is taking place in the Niger Delta. It is quite unfortunate. We don't know who are the

perpetrators and their motives but we wish to say that this is highly regrettable," he said.

The Ijaw leader who would not rule out that the attack was informed by the Niger Delta crisis, however, cautioned those behind the spate of violence to have a rethink because the solution to the crisis does not lie in their strategy.

Okoko reiterated the INC demand that the incoming federal administration should pursue policies and programmes that would institutionalise good governance and for a restructured federal system for the country.

A statement by the Governor's Office yesterday titled 'Yet Another Cowardly Attack', said: "Vice President-Elect and Bayelsa State Governor, Dr. Goodluck Jonathan, has received with shock and sadness, news of a midnight attack on his country home in Otuoke, Ogbia Local Government Area. The attack was carried out at about 1 am today by yet to be identified persons. Dr. Jonathan has accordingly asked the Police and other security services to investigate the incident and swiftly bring the culprits to book.

"The Vice President-Elect states that there are tremendous sacrifices to be made on the route to providing a better life not only for the people of the Niger Delta, but for the mass of the Nigerian people, and that this incident is only one more price to pay in this journey of service. He, however, views the attack as a fun-

damental acts of wickedness by individuals, who have misappropriated, misapplied and now undermine our collective aspirations for justice and good governance.

"Dr. Jonathan notes that there have been indications that having failed to disrupt the presidential elections in Bayelsa with the April 20 attack on the state, there was an effort to cause further chaos in order to create the impression of vulnerability around the Vice President-elect. The cold calculation of these sponsors of violence is to present the Vice President-elect as one whose home support is in serious jeopardy as a way of projecting that he may not be in a position to help bring resolution and closure to the roiling crisis in the Niger Delta.

"But even they themselves know this is a lie, and that Dr. Jonathan enjoys the support and goodwill of the Ijaw and Niger Deltans, who remain focused in ensuring that the incoming administration meets the aspirations of our people.

"The recourse to procuring some persons, giving them boats, guns and a few sticks of dynamite to wreak havoc on fellow citizens must stop. The five decades old

struggle of the people of the Niger Delta for a better deal within the federation must no longer be sundered from within by interests out to feather their own nests. These people seek to divide the Ijaw and the Niger Delta. They must not succeed.

"Dr. Jonathan maintains that the Bayelsa State government shall not stand idly by while faceless elements attempt to set the state on fire. As for those who feel that they are better placed to handle the issues of militancy in the Niger Delta, and are thus advancing it by unholy subterfuge, Dr. Jonathan wishes state that all his life, he has surrendered his fate and destiny to God and the Nigerian people. To do otherwise would amount to challenging fate to a wrestling match. He urges them to do the same.

"The Vice President-elect calls on all Niger Deltans and Nigerians at large to remain vigilant in the face of the on going onslaught against our collective security by those who seek to undermine all we stand for, and to always separate their activities from the genuine agitations of the long suffering people of the Niger Delta."

Prince Harry won

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around him and I am not prepared to export those risks.

"I know Prince Harry will be extremely disappointed and his soldiers will miss his presence in Iraq."

is very disappointed that he will not be able to go to Iraq with his troop on this deployment as he had hoped.

"He fully understands and accepts General Dannatt's difficult decision and remains committed to his Army