

MEND Attacks Gas Plant In Delta

• Gunmen Sack Community

From Kelvin Ebiri,
Port Harcourt

THE Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND) said yesterday that it had successfully attacked the Utorogu Gas Plant operated by Shell Petroleum Development Company (SPDC) in Delta State.

And in Rivers State, gunmen have sacked the Obele community in Ahoada East Local Government Council.

MEND's spokesperson, Jomo Gbomo, said the attack at the gas facility, which occurred at about 3.3am, was aimed at dispelling the seeming false sense of peace and security in that State.

He said the attack and many smaller ones to come were "like the rains and wind heralding the arrival of the hurricane."

However, a private security official said that military forces repelled the onslaught and killed two gunmen. But there was no confirmation of the event by the military.

The spokesperson for the Joint Task Force (JTF), Lt. Colonel Sagir Musa, could not also confirm the attack on Obele community. He told *The Guardian* that the Section Commander in Ahoada had not contacted the JTF headquarters on the invasion of the community.

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According to the *Associated Press*, the private security official that spoke on condition of anonymity said that the attackers weren't able to enter the plant.

But Gbomo, the spokesman for the region's most potent militant group, confirmed that MEND was involved in the fighting but gave no details. The group called off a month-long unilateral ceasefire last week.

Gbomo gave reasons why the attack was carried out: "MEND decided on this location to dispel the false sense of peace and security in Delta State, which the governor (Dr. Emmanuel Uduaghan) has been boasting about," he said.

"It is also to send a message to the oil companies that all the pipelines they have repaired in the Western Delta will soon be in need of repairs again."

He added: "Bribing compromised militants to protect your pipelines is a myopic strategy and the wisest thing to do is to ensure (that) the

Nigerian government is just to the oil bearing communities and implement a true federal system.

"All the fighters returned to base after the mission and we are wondering where the army will get the dead bodies to defend its story that three of our fighters were killed."

MEND also said one of the British hostages in its custody had contracted a strange sickness and was very ill. However, the group said it could not disclose the identity of the sick Briton "so as not to panic his family."

The two British men, who have been under MEND's custody since September 2008 are Robin Barry Hughes and Matthew John Maguire.

MEND said it decided to separate the two men following the recent JTF air strikes at suspected militant camps in Rivers State. It alleged that the military action was a foiled attempt to rescue the men.