

# Three soldiers, suspected pirate feared dead in Bayelsa clash

By Julius Osahon, Yenagoa

19 June 2018 | 2:00 am

Three soldiers attached to the military Operation Delta Safe (OPDS) in the oil-rich Niger Delta and a suspected sea pirate have been feared killed during a gun duel at the Shell Petroleum Development Company (SPDC)-operated Tunu flow station in Letugbene, Ekeremor council area of Bayelsa State.



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The incident, which occurred in the early hours of Sunday, reportedly followed a futile attempt by suspected armed sea pirates, in four speedboats, to allegedly invade the facility where the soldiers were stationed.

Efforts to get comments from the media officer to the military outfit were botched, as his mobile phone was switched off. However, a security source told The Guardian that four lives were lost to the shoot-out, including three military personnel.

He said though he could not ascertain the identity of the armed youths, “the soldiers were deployed to guard the SPDC flow station in the area. They engaged the youths in a shoot-out while trying to stop the invasion of the facility.”



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According to reliable sources within the community, the invasion may not be unconnected with the conflict between the indigenes and the oil firm over the ownership of the flow station.

A State High Court, sitting in Yenagoa and presided over by Chief Judge Kate Abiri, had on July 30, 2012 entered judgment in favour of the community. It had declared that Letugbene was the owner of all land and areas bordering the location of the flow station that has been operated by the SPDC for more than 18 years replete with litigation.



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The appeal by the oil company at the Court of Appeal, Port Harcourt, Rivers State was dismissed for want of prosecution on June 11, 2013. This was sequel to the application of the community filed by its counsel, Nnamdi Ugwuka, at same court.





