

Two feared dead in confrontation over Rivers oil spills

By **Ann Godwin, Port Harcourt**

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Two persons were at the weekend feared dead at Kegbara-Dere community in Gokana Local Council of Rivers State following an altercation between the indigenes and the military in the wake of two fresh oil spills in the area. The spillages also wreaked havoc on farmlands and polluted aquatic life.

The incident, it was gathered occurred in an oil facility owned by Shell Petroleum Development Company (SPDC) in B-Dere and Kpor communities within the council area. The oil major was reportedly trying to access the site and effect repairs when the spill occurred.

Chairman of Kegbara-Dere Town Council, Dornu Godswill, disclosed that one Nen-Elkpege Legbara and another person lost their lives, while Mr. Friday Menu Komene and two others, who sustained bullet injuries, were receiving treatment. He alleged that the military, providing security for the oil workers, invaded the area and stirred the resultant panic and fleeing of the community by the indigenes.

Godswill claimed that the Dutch oil firm resumed activities on the Kpor trunk line without their knowledge. He wondered why the military “attacked” their settlement when the spills were not in theirs but K-Dere. Contacted, SPDC’s spokesman, Michael Adande, said the firm would respond to the allegations in due time.

Also, the spokesperson for the 6 Division of the Nigerian Army, Port Harcourt, Colonel Aminu Ilyasu, in a statement yesterday said: “The community was at no time invaded. The bad boys setting fire on the TNP and infracting the lines attacked the SPDC technical crew by firing fiercely for over three hours from the evil forest as they call it, which can only be accessed through the community from the direction the firing was coming from. “The escort team returned fire towards the direction until the firing from their side was suppressed. The entire K-Dere community was complicit in the act of attacking the crew and soldiers. That is what they do all the time. The bunkering point had to be clamped and taken out. “It is the community’s usual business to open points and infract the 24 and 28 inch pipelines passing through Ogoniland.”

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