

Soldiers Invade Port Harcourt

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with Agency report

The federal government carried out its threat to flush out hostage-taking militants in the Niger Delta of the country using military action on Friday as Nigerian troops raided a riverside slum in the southern city of Port Harcourt.

The troops, according to an agency report moved from house to house, shooting sporadically, forcing residents to run for safety.

• Kill Suspected Militants • Residents Flee

The report quoted villagers as saying that several bodies riddled with bullets were found as they fled the villages.

"The report reaching us in Port Harcourt is that the Army has invaded some villages and there are dead people everywhere," a source

was also quoted.

A local radio, *Rhythm FM*, was quoted as saying "Troops have landed in (the district of) Ilabuchi

and they are shooting sporadically, moving from house to house. People are now fleeing the area."

The agency said a military spokesman confirmed that an operation was under way but declined to give details.

Residents said the troops fanned out over a large riverside area along a road where kidnappers last Sunday dumped and burnt a getaway car after abducting six foreign oil workers from a nightclub popular with expatriates.

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A reliable source confirmed the incident to *Sunday Independent*, but refused to give details.

According to him, details of the incident would best be got today.

Rivers State Commissioner for Information, Mr. Magnus Abe, refused to speak on the incident when contacted by our reporter.

"Call the Army PRO to confirm, because we don't control them and we do not know anything about their movement. I have no knowledge of their operations," he said.

But in his own reaction, the Coordinator of Ijaw Monitoring Group (IMG), Mr. Joseph Evah, condemned the action.

He expressed concern over innocent lives that would have been affected, especially those of defenceless women and children.

It would be recalled that only last Tuesday, the federal government decided to use military might to halt the activities of hostage takers in the Niger Delta.

At a closed door meeting with some governors from the area, President Olusegun Obasanjo warned them as well as oil companies in the area not to pay ransom to any hostage takers any longer.

Militants had in recent times kidnapped a dozen of foreign oil workers.

PDP Begg Presidential Aspirants