

# Gunmen Attack Agip Oil, Kidnap Four

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Three Italians and a Lebanese were kidnapped by gunmen in an Agip offshore station in the Niger Delta on Thursday.

→ A Nigerian was reportedly killed in the exchange of fire and another Lebanese received serious injuries.

Militants stormed the oil firm's Brass terminal in Bayelsa, which  
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Deputy gov

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exports about 200,000 barrels of oil per day (bpd).

Numbering about eight, the group arrived in a convoy of seven speed boats at 06:15 a.m. and met a feeble resistance from soldiers guarding the facility.

The identity of the deceased could not be confirmed at press time.

Agip, in a statement posted on its website, named those abducted as Arena Francesco (Italian); Russo Cosma, and Dieghi Roberto, both Italian

staff of Plantgeria, a contracting firm to Agip, as well as Imad S., a Lebanese working with Abed Catering Services.

Commander of the Joint Military Task Force, Alfred Ilogho, recounted that "the invading militant groups did not succeed in entering the terminal, instead they by-passed it and went to a residential facility where they kidnapped the three Italian expatriates."

An Agip official in Lagos could not state the whereabouts of the hostages, though he assured that Bayelsa officials have begun negotiation with the

militants on how to secure the release of the captives.

Kidnappings for ransom have become a common phenomenon in the Niger Delta, as hostages are usually released unharmed after monies have changed hands.

Last month, a British hostage and a Nigerian died during an attempt to rescue captives.

Nigeria, the world's eighth biggest exporter of crude, has lost more than 500,000 bpd or a fifth of its output, since February when militants staged a series of armed raids on oil

installations in the Niger Delta.

The militants are demanding greater local control of the oil wealth.

The Niger Delta, which accounts for all of Nigeria's oil output, has, for years, been plagued by kidnappings, attacks on oil facilities, smuggling of crude oil, and politically motivated violence.

Thursday's attack came as Nigeria prepares to host the 143rd extraordinary conference of ministers of the Organisation of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) on December 14.

Deputy gov ex SSC others disqualified from Delta gubernatorial