

# Militants kill five soldiers

From Clarice Azuatalam,  
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**T**HE lull in the violence in the Niger Delta was ruptured yesterday when militants attacked an oil pumping station, killing at least five soldiers.

Nine other soldiers are said to be missing after the attack.

Another report also said 25 officials of a contractor to Shell Petroleum Development Company (SPDC), who were working at the station at the time, were feared missing.

The Joint Revolutionary Council (JRC) which only 24 hours before had threatened to re-start hostilities against the interests of the

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Federal Government and the oil majors, promptly claimed responsibility for the attack and killings. It said the trend would continue.

JRC comprises the Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND), the Mujaheed Dokubo-Asari-led Niger Delta Peoples Volunteer Force (NDPVF) and Martyrs Brigade. They demanded the release of Dokubo-Asari who is facing treasonable charges.

The *Nation* gathered that the militants who were about 70 in number, loaded themselves in five speed boats, and stormed the facility located in Cawthorne Channel in Degema Local Government Area of Rivers State being guarded by 15 soldiers at about 2pm and opened fire on them.

In the end, five of the soldiers lay dead but one of them escaped alive from the scene of the attack and it was he (the soldier) who alerted the outside world of the attack.

The surviving soldier, eyewitnesses told *The Nation*, also revealed that nine of his colleagues were still missing. As of press time, the fate of the nine soldiers could not be ascertained.

An SPDC source told *The Nation* that the gunmen sank two patrol boats conveying the soldiers, who were from the 2<sup>nd</sup> Amphibious Brigade, Bori Camp, Port Harcourt, and were escorting an SPDC supply barge near the station.

At least five of the troops got drowned even as bullets were rained on them.

Amphibious Brigade spokesman Major Sagir Musa, confirmed the incident, but said he could not ascertain the number of casualties.

"We have received reports of an attack on a Shell facility at Cawthorne Channel and that some of our men were involved in the attack. We cannot confirm the number of casualty yet," he said.

But an SPDC source confirmed that 25 staff of a contractor company working with Shell were missing after the attack.

The source explained that the attack happened around Bille community in Degema local government area.

He added that the attackers, besides sinking the patrol boats, "made sure they sank the barge with the products it was conveying." He also said nothing had been heard of the 25

staff of the contractor company, which he declined to name.

In a statement signed by JRC's spokesperson Cynthia Whyte and sent online to journalists in Port Harcourt, the organisation said the attack was merely a tip of the iceberg as it was just to show the Federal Government that it could take on Nigeria in a battle anytime and anywhere.

The statements entitled: "Release Dokubo-Asari or Get Ready for War", said: "Hours ago, heroic and patriotic combatants of the Joint Revolutionary Council (JRC) comprising NDPVF, MEND & The Martyrs Brigade, once again demonstrated their ability to call to nought, the insincerity and dubiousness of the corrupt and satanic Nigerian state.

"The key victims of this confrontation were soldiers who at one time or the other, attacked our communities and assaulted our people. This judgment will be continued, on-going and sustained. We will scale up this campaign with every show of insincerity on the part of the Nigerian state and those that lord over it.

"The purpose of this celebration of ability and capability was to prove to the armed forces of the Nigerian state that we can take on them anywhere, anytime and anyhow.

"As combatants who recognize the need to respect the rules of engagement, we resisted all urge to smoothly take out all the malnourished and underpaid soldiers of the Nigerian state. However, those who felt the temptation to test our might were rewarded by the fatal venom of our bullets. This is just the beginning.

"We demand once again, the unconditional release from the gallows of the Nigerian state, the flag bearer and leading light of the Ijaw and Niger Delta struggle, Alhaji Mujahid Dokubo-Asari.

"If this demand is not met in good time, we will roll out the drums of war and our heroic and patriotic combatants will begin a revolution against all interests and agents of the Nigerian state as well as her imperialist collaborators."

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elections. The elections are not for sale. Very soon, we will be requesting detailed accounting from parties or candidates on how they spent their money and from where they even got the money."

On the forthcoming registration of voters, Iwu said Nigerians should not expect a dramatic exercise as in the past, saying the first week of the exercise will only target special registration areas created since the last elections.

They include the new Bakassi, a settlement created for the displaced people of Bakassi Peninsula which was ceded to Cameroon following the International Court of Justice (ICJ) decision of 2002, new areas awarded to the country by the ICJ in parts of Taraba and Adamawa states, new cattle village along the

Enugu-Port Harcourt Expressway, some settlements in Takum, Taraba State, and some riverine areas of Lagos, Delta and Bayelsa states.

The Chairman said the Commission had similarly reduced the period of registration during the Ramadan (Muslim fast) period to 3 p.m.

He said the active period of the registration would begin on October 21 and November 30, 2006.

The list of registered voters will be published on December 14. February 14, next year will be the last date for the review of the voters' register and updating same.

He confirmed that the body had ordered for 33,000 electoral machines. Only few of the equipment have arrived in the country, but the voter registration with the ones available. INEC's calculation is that it needs 30,000 machines.