

16 killed in Navy, armed youths' clash in Niger Delta

■ Gunmen attack Chevron facility, several persons feared killed

Armed youths and naval personnel clashed on Thursday night in Nembe creeks of Bayelsa State, leaving 16 persons dead. Four of those killed are naval personnel.

■ Isaac Ombe, Yenagoa and Clarice Azuatalam, PortHarcourt ■

But naval authorities said yesterday that three of their men were killed by the youths in the encounter while the latter lost eleven people. Four naval ratings were injured in the clash.

A staff of the Shell Petroleum Development Company, identified simply as Dennis, also died in the clash.

Continued on page 5



16 killed in Navy, armed youths' clash in Niger Delta

Continued from page 1

The clash which occurred in Nembe Basambari, the paternal hometown of Bayelsa State Governor Timipre Sylva, was said to have started during a local government chairmanship campaign.

An eye witness disclosed that the incident occurred when a group of armed youths went on rampage during a local government chairmanship candidate's campaign.

Though circumstances leading to the encounter were still hazy as at the time of this report, it was, however, alleged that the incident occurred as a result of government's attempt to impose a candidate for the forthcoming council elections on the people. A navy boat was deployed to the creeks to intimidate persons opposed to a particular candidate favoured by government, sources said.

The armed youths were said to have ambushed the boat along the clumsy, meandering creeks of Nembe. They reportedly shot at the boat with the naval men returning

fire.

In the course of the sporadic shooting on them, the Shell staff, who was inside the boat, lost his life. Several naval personnel were injured.

The wounded naval personnel were rushed to the Nembe General Hospital where they later died.

Chief Alfred Tamuno, the Chairman of the Nembe-Basambiri Council of Chiefs, who confirmed the incident, however, linked it to the recent crisis between two youth groups in the community which further resulted to the present situation.

Chief Tamuno further informed that a Special Adviser to the Governor on Youths Matters, Mr. Igoli had visited the community allegedly to campaign for a favoured candidate when the incident occurred.

The Nembe Chiefs' Council Chairman further disclosed that "the youths were said to have mobilized and stormed the community but their target

had left the community. On their way back, there was shooting involving the Naval patrol boat."

The Nembe community, he vowed, would bring to book all those involved in the criminal act.

He however disclosed that the incident would not stop the proposed meeting today of all sons of Nembe Basambiri above the ages 18 with the council of chiefs at the town hall, as the incident would form the major topic.

It would be recalled that, just last June, three soldiers and two civilians were killed by youths from the Nembe creek. Up till now, their killers are yet to be brought to book.

Contacted by *The Nation*, the Director of Naval Information, Commodore David Nabaiga, confirmed the clash.

He said: "There were casualties on both sides after our men returned fire following the attack by the youths.

"In the skirmish, three of our men were killed, four injured. The attackers had 11 of their men killed by our troops. Nigerians should appreciate the supreme sacrifice the Navy is making for the country in the Niger Delta."

Meanwhile, gunmen in speedboats attacked the Nigerian military at an oil flow station operated by Chevron at late Thursday night. But the facility was not affected.

The JTF spokesman, Lt. Col Sagir Musa said yesterday: "Last night, some men in speedboats attacked our men at Robert-Kiri flow station. In the shoot-out, there were fatalities. We lost one man, a naval personnel.

"The attack did not affect the Chevron facility even as the group responsible for it has not been identified."

Businessman arraigned on charge over N32b fraud

Eric IKHILAE

Fernandez, who was arrested in Abuja earlier this week was arraigned with three firms - Joseann Global Resources Limited, Pet Prime Impex Limited and Pet Ferns Nigeria Limited, with which he allegedly committed the crime.

It was noted in the charge that the accused 'fraudulently' presented 38 cheques in the affected banks within two days, January 22 and 23, 2008. He was accused of 'fraudulently' presenting 21 cheques covering about N8billion to the said banks on January 22, 2008 alone.

On January 23, 2008, he allegedly presented another set of

17 cheques covering N6.5billion to the affected banks.

Count 56 alleged that the businessman, his said companies and one John Ogidi (still at large) between November 2007 and February 2008 "did conspire to commit an offence to wit: laundering of N32billion through cheque kitting, suppression, swap or round tripping."

Their alleged offences, according to the charge, are punishable under section 1(2) (a) of the Miscellaneous Offences Act Cap M17 of the Federation of Nigeria 2004 and Section 14(1) of the Money Laundering (Prohibition) Act 2004.