

Suspected oil thief dies in explosion

A SUSPECTED oil thief was at the weekend burnt to death after a trunk line belonging to the Nigerian Agip Oil Company (NAOC) at Egbematoru in Southern Ijaw Local Government Area of Bayelsa State exploded and went up in flames.

It was also learnt that many of the oil thieves sustained injuries as they scampered for safety.

The fire was reportedly caused by a gang of suspected

From Mike Odiegwu,
Yenagoa

oil thieves, who attempted to break and siphon oil from the pipeline.

It was gathered that officials of Agip battled to put out the fire.

But there were allegations that the soldiers attached to the Joint Task Force (JTF), *Operation Pulo Shield*, caused the inferno when they fired at some suspected oil thieves.

JTF, however, denied the allegations. It attributed the explosion to the activities of the suspected economic saboteurs.

The Media Coordinator, JTF, Col. Onyema Nwachukwu, confirmed that there was an explosion in the area.

Bayelsa communities under the aegis of the Brass League of Friends (BLF) confirmed that NAOC responded by cleaning the environment impacted by a recent oil spill

from its pipeline in the area.

Twon Brass, Okpoama and Odioma were affected by the spill, which was said to have spread to the Atlantic Ocean.

The incident reportedly disrupted fishing and compelled residents to call on Agip to arrest the situation.

BLF patron, Mr. Israel Sunny-Goli, in a statement described the company's response as "an indication that the oil company takes issues of the environment serious."