

Two militants shot dead

• Govt arrests hostage-takers

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with agency reports

TWO of about 12 militants who invaded an oil facility owned by a subsidiary of the Shell Petroleum Development Company in Bayelsa State were shot dead on Wednesday by naval officers.

"Two of them were shot dead by naval officers, while one other was arrested alive. He is currently undergoing investigation," the Commissioner, Bayelsa Police Command, Mr. Hafiz Ringim, told *Agence France Presse* on the telephone.

Also, two men who allegedly kidnapped seven foreign oil workers in the Niger Delta and collected N90m from both the Federal Government and the Rivers State Government before releasing them have been arrested.

They were on Tuesday arraigned at a Federal High Court in Abuja for various offences.

A Shell spokesman reportedly confirmed that armed men attacked a workers' residential area near Nun River in Okporoma, but the attack was immediately repelled by security forces.

This is the second reported attack on a Shell facility in Okporoma in five weeks.

About 60 Nigerian employees of Shell and contract personnel were taken hostage by armed men on October 10 in a Shell facility in the community.

Scores of armed youths, protesting the alleged non-implementation of a Shell accord with the local community, invaded a flowstation on Nun River in Okporoma,

forcing the closure of the facility and causing a loss of 12,000 barrels of oil per day.

The hostages were released within 72 hours after talks between representatives of the youths, government and Shell officials.

Last Saturday, unidentified gunmen stole three speedboats from a pumping station operated by Italian oil company, Agip.

The armed men stole the boats from the Clough Creek flow station in Bayelsa State.

That incident occurred as another Agip flowstation in Bayelsa State, Tebidaba, was occupied by the armed protesters who invaded it on November 6.

The two suspected hostage-takers, Messrs. Gbokos Osvwo and Asiagbe Lucky, pleaded not guilty to the seven charges levelled against them.

The trial judge, Justice Babs Kuewumi ordered that they should be remanded in prison custody pending the time their application for bail would be heard.

He adjourned the case to December 4.

The suspects were charged with kidnapping of foreign oil workers, demanding and receiving ransom and holding the oil workers hostage.

The acts constitute offences under Sections 15 of the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (Establishment) Act, 2004 and 364 of the Criminal Code Act Cap 77, Laws of the Federation of Nigeria.

The kidnapped workers are Messrs. Geinhard Czeh (German), Tomasz Olgierd Andralojc (Polish), Royce Parfait (American), John Guyace

(British), Ian Rawlings (British) and Bugar Fogerty (Irish) and Guido Scarfrath (German).

The offences were committed in Port Harcourt, the Rivers State Capital, in August.

Osvwo was accused of demanding and receiving N35m as ransom before releasing the workers.

He allegedly collected the money with others said to be at large.

According to the charge, Lucky only took part in the kidnapping of Scarfrath of Billfinger Berger Gas and oil Services Limited at Port Harcourt.

Before Scarfrath was released, Lucky and Osvwo released the German after they allegedly collected N55m.

This brings to N90m the total money collected before releasing the foreign workers.

Four other alleged hostage-takers had already been charged before the Federal High Court in Abuja on similar charges.

They were granted bail last Thursday but were immediately arrested by men of the State Security Service.

Immediately they were rearrested a new charge was filed against them, a move which implied that the Federal Government had expected that they would be granted bail.

The suspects Livingstone Kiani, Eric Abadida, Uroh Kiani and Loveday Lucky were first arraigned on August 16, 2006 for terrorism and other related offences.