

Militants strike again in Rivers

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THE crisis in the Niger Delta has deteriorated with the alleged killing of 12 traditional rulers in Rivers State by militants.

Eyewitnesses said the slain monarchs were part of a 14-man team that left the Abonnema Wharf for the oil-rich kingdom on a motorised boat.

They were said to have been stopped by about seven militants at a point known as Shell

Pipeline.

One of the sources said that two other chiefs who escaped with bullet wounds were on admission at the University of Port Harcourt Teaching Hospital.

Amongst those killed was, Chief Dan Opusunji, the spokesman for the Kula people.

Four of the 12 names released by the Rivers State Police Command were, chiefs Dan Opusungi, A.D. Opuari, Obaye Otuga and Telema Lilly.

It was learnt that the militants

took away eight corpses of the slain chiefs in the ill-fated boat.

A titled chief in Kula, who was not in the area at the time of the attack, told our correspondent on Monday that he lost his brother.

He said, "What happened in Kula was a mutiny carried out by youths who do not want the leadership of the community to continue so that they can ransack the area and do what they like with oil companies operating in the

area."

The state Police Public Relations Officer, Mrs. Ireju Barasua, confirmed the incident in Kula.

She said that riot, regular and marine policemen had been deployed in the riverine community to fish out the culprits.

Barasua, a deputy superintendent of police, warned youths in the state's riverine communities to desist from wanton destruction of lives.

There had been uneasy calm in Kula over the leadership of the community.