

Warri boils again as Ijaw, Urhobo youths clash

**Sola Adebayo and
Ibanga Isine**

THE fragile peace in Warri, Delta State, collapsed on Monday following two separate protests in the oil-rich city.

One of the protests was between Ijaw and Urhobo youths and the other by commercial motorcyclists popularly known as *Okada* riders.

An unspecified number of people were injured in the protests which occurred shortly after gunmen attacked security vessels- Pathfinder and MV Patience- in Rivers State.

A Naval rating was killed during the onslaught on Pathfinder, a gunboat belonging to the Nigeria Navy, while a crew member was said to have been thrown overboard MV Patience.

Trouble broke out in Warri in the early hours of Monday when an Ijaw youth was killed by members of an Urhobo secret group.

The 15-year-old, whose identity could not be ascertained

• Gunmen attack security vessels, kill Naval rating

as at 4pm on Monday, was murdered at Mclver area of the city.

Irked by the killing, youths believed to be Ijaw armed themselves and invaded the area.

In the free-for-all that ensued, many people sustained varied degree of injuries.

It was gathered that the Ijaw youths later retreated as they were overpowered by their Urhobo counterparts.

As at 2pm on Monday, many residents and owners of business outfits in the area had fled in droves for fear of reprisal attack by the Ijaw youths.

The Warri/Sapele Road was deserted from Agbassa area to Okere Junction as at 2pm.

Policemen from 'A' Division, Warri, were later deployed in the area.

Our correspondent in Warri gathered that some Ijaw and Urhobo leaders had been contacted by police authorities to prevail on the youths to sheathe their swords.

The Commander, Joint Task Force in the Niger Delta, Operation Restore Hope, Maj.-Gen. Lawrence Ngubane, said that he had sent out troops to assess the situation.

A few kilometres from the Mclver area, commercial motorcyclists staged a protest against alleged imposition of illegal levies by the authorities of Warri South, Uvwie and Udu Local Government Areas.

They said they were aggrieved because the authorities of the councils had continued to impose levies on them despite the directive of the state government barring such action.

Just before Warri boiled, gunmen, who wore military camouflage, attacked a security vessel belonging to Total Oil Nigeria Limited at Buoy 35 along Bonny channel and stole one rifle, after throwing a crew member overboard.

A source told our correspondent that the six-man gang sped off into the open sea after the attack as the

remaining crew raised a 'May Day' signal for support from other ships within the channel.

It was learnt that another security boat belonging to another multinational oil firm, Colby Victory, rescued the drowning crew member 30 minutes later.

Our source disclosed the development made Total to order its in-bound convoy of vessels back to their offshore location.

Attempts by our correspondent to speak with Total officials proved abortive.

Shortly after the attack on MV Patience, another set of bandits opened fire on a Pathfinder, a gunboat that was escorting the Nigerian Liquefied Natural Gas flash boats along the Bonny channel.

Our correspondent learnt that apart from killing a rating, the gunmen injured another naval personnel.

It was learnt that the bandits overtook the gunboat close to the Bonny Jetty and fired at it.