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## Gunmen kill two civilians, abduct eight expatriates

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Unidentified gunmen in the early hours of Saturday killed two civilians and abducted eight expatriates from a major oil and gas platform in Bonny, Rivers State.

A security source said six heavily armed men at about 1am invaded an LPG tanker where the civilians and expatriates were housed at the Yellow Platform located at Buoy 38/39 along the Bonny River.

The attack came barely 12 hours after five Russians were abducted by suspected pirates from a Swedish Marine carrier, Herkules, which was on charter by Saipem, a subsidiary of ENI Group.

The vessel with registration number 7523192 and call sign: DSAS was attacked by 15 gunmen onboard two speedboats.

Herkules was sailing towards Akpo Oilfield, operated by Saipem Nigeria Limited, when the suspected pirates captured it 19 nautical miles towards the shores of Bonny.

Twelve persons were onboard the vessel including 11 Russians and one Ukrainian.

But a source told our correspondent that the attack on the LPG tanker lasted for over two hours, during which the invaders wreaked havoc on the crew members.

He said four naval personnel onboard the tanker could not stand the firepower of the six marauding bandits.

"The attack was raw and without any form of precision thereby making it impossible for the security operatives to launch a counter on the bandits.

"The security operatives might have been curtailed by the fear of hitting the civilians on board the vessel while trying to repel the hoodlums.

"That was how the invaders had a field day and killed two civilians before taking away eight expatriates."

When contacted, the spokesman of the Joint Task Force in the state, Lt. Col. Sagir Musa, confirmed the attack in a telephone interview with our correspondent.

Musa said the task force received report that two civilians were shot dead while eight expatriates, whose nationalities were yet to be ascertained, were abducted by six gunmen.

According to him, the gunmen invaded the tanker from 1am up to 2.45am on Saturday.

He said that security agencies were yet to identify the group responsible for the attack, which he said was purely for pecuniary reason.

He said, "Information at the disposal of the JTF, Operation Flush-Out III indicates that six heavily armed men between 1am to 3.45am, at the Yellow Platform, Buoy 38/39 shot two civilians and abducted eight expatriates on an LPG tanker along the Bonny River.

"Those responsible for the dastardly act are yet to be ascertained and no group has taken responsibility for it.

"The motive for the abduction is both pecuniary and criminal and as such, security agencies in the state have been alerted and directed to be on the watch out with a view to apprehending the culprits."

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