

damaged ship equipment. No injuries were reported in the attack.

On 4 Dec 08, a Russian and a Mexican national along with one Nigerian were reportedly kidnapped by gunmen from the vessel Oceanic Orion approximately 13 nautical miles off the coast of Akwa Ibom State near the Addax Petroleum flow station. The captain of the vessel was reportedly shot and wounded in the foot. The abductees were freed on 17 Dec 08.

On 5 Dec 08, unknown gunmen seized the vessel Tiger Fish belonging to Hercules Offshore Drilling Company in St Bartholomew River, at the entrance to the west of the Sombreiro River in Rivers State. The six crew members, all believed to have been Nigerian nationals, were held hostage for a short period of time. It is believed that the kidnapping was carried out to extort funds connected to the Christmas holidays, as the same vessel had been targeted in the area the previous year.

On 19 Dec 08, gunmen on two speedboats attacked two oil service vessels, the Falcon Crest and the Falcon Wings, in Addax's Anthan Field off the coast of Akwa Ibom state. The pirates stole valuables and severely beat the captain of one of the vessels, while the Filipino captain of the other vessel was killed. The perpetrators were said to have escaped towards Cameroon.

Kidnapping

Abductions of foreign nationals in the Niger Delta saw a notable increase during the fourth Quarter of 2008 compared to the fourth Quarter of 2007. During Oct-Dec 08, 39 foreign nationals were kidnapped compared to 16 during the same period of 2007, representing an increase of over 142%. During Oct-Dec 06, 20 foreign nationals were kidnapped. Despite the remarkable difference in abductions between the fourth quarters of 2007 and 2008, overall abduction levels remain lower (82) than they did during 2007 (172), when a series of multiple kidnappings from sea vessels and petroleum company facilities during Jan and May 07 skewed the number of kidnappings upwards. Even though the monthly number of abductions fluctuates from month to month (see figure 3), the quarterly comparison chart shows a clearly increasing trend on kidnap-for-ransom schemes for 2008 (figure 4).

Comparative Abductions Chart

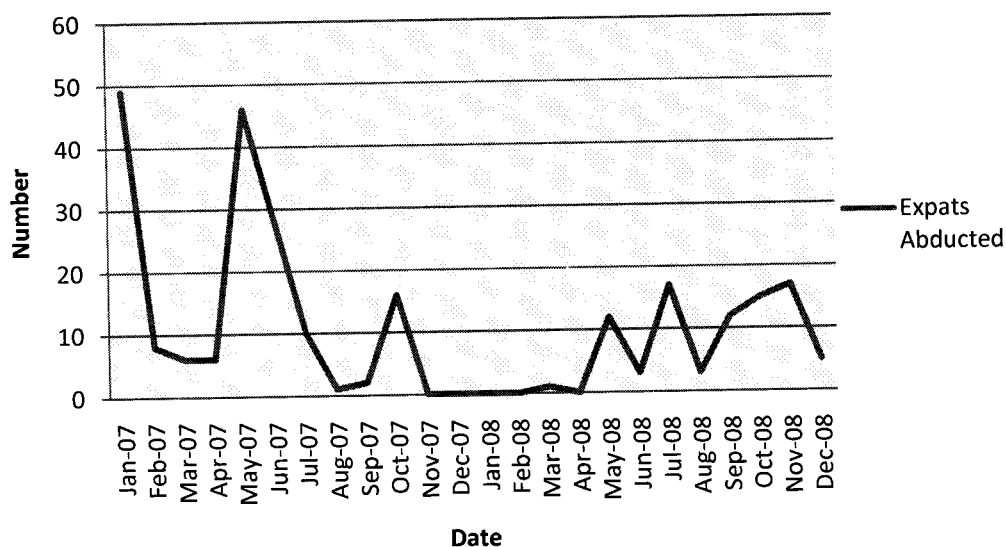


Figure 3. Abductions of Foreign Nationals per Month since Jan 07.

Initially, kidnappings were carried out largely for politically-motivated reasons by a number of armed groups with a political agenda for the Niger Delta. Gradually however, the tactic started being used by local cult/criminal groups to receive ransoms. The shift appears to have become more pronounced in the past six months. In fact, only one kidnapping incident (31 Oct 08, 10 French nationals were