

Militants Storm Shell Facility, Kill Two

Militants operating from the creeks of the Niger Delta on Thursday night commenced what they called a full scale war with men of the Nigerian armed forces with an attack on a military formation located at the Nun River Flow Station of the Shell Petroleum Development

*From Segun James in Yenagoa and
Chika Amanze-Nwachukwu in Lagos*

Company at Oporoma, headquarters of Southern Ijaw Local Government Area of Bayelsa State.

In the daring attack, which took place in the late hours of Thursday, the operation left at least two soldiers killed with several

others wounded and three oil workers held hostage.

As at press time THIS-DAY could not ascertain the identities of the slain soldiers but it was gathered the action of the militants was a reprisal attack on the army which at the same oil facility killed some militants a few weeks ago.

The attack is coming

barely a week after militants invaded the Brass oil export terminal belonging to Italian oil giant, Nigerian Agip Oil Company at Twon-Brass, headquarters of Brass Local Government Area of Bayelsa State, where four expatriates were abducted and are still being held hostage in an unknown location in the

Niger Delta.

In that operation, one of the Brass youths who attempted to rescue the three Italians and a Lebanese working for the company was gunned down, with many others sustaining varying degrees of injuries.

The attack was so bloody that cars, speed boats and

houses were set ablaze by the militants.

The Oporoma invasion, according to a native, took place around 11 pm, following a dispute over unpaid money, totalling N120 million by SPDC to the local community.

The attackers stormed the flow station in five

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speed boats, attempted to take it over but were reprise by the men of the Joint Task Force on the Niger Delta..

The Coordinator of the Bayelsa state government-owned security outfit, the Bayelsa Volunteers, Chief Joshua Benemesia, disclosed in Yenagoa yesterday that the militants who were behind the October attack may be responsible for the latest invasion.

Benemesia noted that reports from his field workers indicated that only a naval personnel was shot in the leg and that there was no casualty, but confirmed that

four other unnamed persons sustained injuries.

Commissioner of Police, Bayelsa State Command, Mr. Hafiz Ringim, also confirmed the invasion, but was yet to get the details when **THISDAY** called him yesterday evening.

Spokesman of Shell, Mr. Bisi Ojediran explained that the station had been shut down as a precaution, cutting production by 12,000 barrels of oil per day.

Ojediran said that scores of oil workers, mostly Nigerians typically live in such compounds but declined to say how many people had been in the facility.

The group, he said, called itself the Niger Delta Freedom Fighters, but was silent on whether it had made any specific demands.

Police Commissioner Ringim had said earlier that military authorities were planning to regain control of the oil complex.

Attacks have become common in the oil-rich region. Assailants have ranged from militants claiming they are fighting for the freedom of their imprisoned leaders and a greater share of oil wealth, to criminal gangs looking for a ransom from hostages.