

Gunmen Attack Exxon Subsidiary Vessel, Crew Member Killed

Gunmen yesterday attacked a vessel belonging to Rangk Nigeria Limited, a contractor to Esso Exploration and Production Nigeria Limited (EEPNL), and subsidiary of Exxon Mobil Corporation, killing a Nigerian crew member in the vessel.

The attack happened in the early hours of yesterday in the Niger Delta while the crew were enroute Onne Port in Rivers State.

Although details of the attack were sketchy as is

By Fidelia Okwuonu

often the case with Niger Delta attacks, sources however confirmed that about eight unidentified gun men in a speed boat boarded the Seamark vessel on the Bonny river, in Rivers state.

"They ransacked the vessel, taking away a laptop and some radios. The vessel then continued on its way and is now secure at Onne."

The Manager, External Affairs, Rangk Nigeria Limited, Gloria Essien Danner, confirmed the inci-

dent, saying the MV Seamark, a contractor supply vessel owned by Rangk Nigeria Limited, which supports our offshore operations, was boarded and robbed at the early hours of yesterday by some armed persons, while enroute Onne Port in Rivers State.

Attacks by politically motivated rebels in the Delta, who last year shut down a fifth of Nigerian oil production, have subsided since a new president took office in May but armed robbers and pirates still stage sporadic

raids in the creeks.

President Umaru Yar'Adua's envoys have tried to negotiate a ceasefire with rebel groups demanding local control over oil revenues for the impoverished communities of the Niger Delta. While talks have been going on, their attacks on oil facilities and kidnapping of oil workers have subsided.

But the line between militancy and crime is blurred in the Delta, which remains prone to violent attacks such as armed robberies or kidnapping for ransom.

Nigeria, an OPEC member, is the world's eighth-biggest exporter of crude oil and disruptions to supply due to violence in the Niger Delta are one of the causes of oil's surge towards \$100 a barrel.

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From Sufuyan Ojeifo

in Abuja

have translated to mean that the ministry had moved forward to the level of implementation. But

what was on ground was farther than that. No contract had been implemented.