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## Nigeria: Explosion At P/Harcourt Naval Jetty

**This Day (Lagos)**  
**22 March 2008**

Posted to the web 24 March 2008

THIS DAY

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Ahamefula Ogbu  
 Port Harcourt

A loud explosion yesterday rocked the Nigerian Naval Jetty in Port Harcourt, Rivers State - the NNS Pathfinder - during which two naval men were feared dead, others injured, and conflicting reports as to the cause of the explosion.

Few hours after the explosion, the Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND) claimed responsibility saying it was retaliating the killing of some civilians by the navy which rammed their patrol boat into them without any apology. MEND said: "This was a sabotage on two gun boats by our men inside the Naval jetty. This was done to retaliate the killing of innocent civilians by the Nigerian Navy who used their gunboat to crash into a passenger ferry without even an apology for the loss of lives", a statement from Gbomo Jomo on MEND's website said yesterday.

But naval authorities contradicted MEND's claim, attributing the incident to an "electrical induced fire." The fire was said to have been started by a spark in an electrical fuel line of a patrol boat about to take off to sea for patrol, but the combined efforts of Shell and Mobil fire service aided by the Navy brought the fire under control.

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While a statement from the spokesman of the Joint Task Force in the state, Lt. Col. Sagir Musa admitted that three boats and a barge were affected, the spokesman for the Navy, Lt Olabisi Way said it was one boat caught in the incident. However, neither admitted any casualties. But eyewitness accounts said the casualty figures

might be two or even more people who might have died from the explosion. The naval spokesman dispelled insinuations that the fire might have been as a result of sabotage and instead assured that the incident would not hamper the effective patrol of the coastal areas by the navy.

Sagir said: "There was an electrical explosion this morning at 0900hrs at the NNS Pathfinder jetty. It was purely an accident caused by an electrical mishap. About three boats and a barge were torched and casualty figure is still being collated. It is feared that one or two of our men may have died in the process." Way said the combined team of the Navy, Mobil and Shell battled the fire and that some were wounded in the process. He said the incident was not serious and would not impact negatively on the ability of their personnel to secure and patrol the coastal areas of the country.

The naval spokesman restated the Navy's commitment to stopping all

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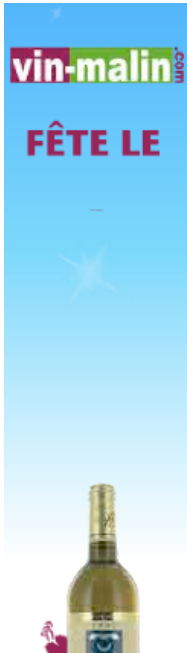
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manner of illegal activities in the region and its waterways.

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