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## Pipeline Fire Kills 40

*Collins Barasimeye •*

*Wednesday, Apr 22, 2009*

More than 40 persons are feared to have been roasted in a pipeline explosion which occurred at the Atlas Cove in Lagos following bunkering activities

The Tide gathered that the explosion took place Sunday at Iyana-Odo after Ilado, a riverine community where the Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation (NNPC) pipeline runs through the Atlas Cove into Lagos.

Lagos Police Public Relations Officer, Mr Frank Mba said he was yet to get full details of the incident, but our reporter, who went to the scene of the incident saw charred bodies floating on the river at Iyana Odo village after

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Ilado in the Atlas Cove area.

Our correspondent had observed a thick cloud from the direction of the Atlas Cove on Sunday evening, and calls were made to the Lagos State Police Public Relations Officer, Mr. Frank Mba, who promised to get across to the divisional police officers in the affected area.

Later, the police spokesman said his men confirmed nothing of such happened at the particular time. Mba, who promised earlier that he would also contact relevant emergency management agencies, also said none of them could confirm the incident.

However, when our correspondent visited the area, Monday, the difficult terrain of the village compelled him to hire a speedboat to get to the scene of the explosion.

Close to the scene, our reporter saw, at least, five charred bodies floating on the sea.

As the speedboat conveying him moved towards the scene, three persons came from the nearby village in a speedboat, querying the journalist's mission in the area.

Sensing danger, the reporter requested the speedboat driver to return him to the jetty under Liverpool Bridge, from where the 30-minute journey to the explosion site took off.

Meanwhile, sources from the village confirmed that no fewer than 40 persons died in the explosion.

The Tide also learnt some policemen and officials NNPC had visited the scene.

The explosion, notwithstanding, several persons suspected to be pipeline vandals, were

observed lifting fuel in jerry cans around the Liverpool area of Apapa on Monday.

The vandals, it is believed, capitalised on the strike by petrol tanker drivers in Lagos to lift fuel illegally for sale.

When contacted again on Monday evening, the Lagos police spokesman still maintained he had not got information about the explosion, and promised to get in touch with deputy commissioner of police in charge of operations.

Kevin Nengia

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