

Ijaw militants abduct three expatriate oil workers in Bayelsa

By Samuel Oyadongha

YENAGOA—IJAW militants yesterday in a dawn raid abducted three Italians working with the Eni group, Nigerian Agip Oil Company (NAOC) at the Brass terminal and farm tank belonging to the company in the Brass local government area of the Bayelsa State and shot dead a community youth before disappearing into the creek.

The deceased youth whose name could not be immediately

ascertained, it was learnt was one of the many youths from Brass community that attempted to stop the militants from escaping with their captives.

The rescue team (Brass youths) who on getting the news of the invasion of the terminal were said to have gone in pursuit of the militants but came under the barrage of gun fire from the retreating armed gunmen who disappeared into the maze of the creeks killing one while another sustained serious in-

jury. It was gathered that the heavily armed gunmen who stormed the terminal in three speed boats at exactly 5.30am in a commando styled operation which lasted about fifteen minutes caught the military personnel at the farm tank napping as they made away with their captives.

Although no damage was inflicted on the base it was however learnt that the invaders they set ablaze all the boats anchored at the jetty before they zoomed off with the expatriates.

When contacted the state commissioner of police, Alhaji Hafiz Ringim who confirmed the incident however said the information at his disposal was hazy.

Meanwhile, Bayelsa State government has assured that everything is being done to secure the early release of the expatriate oil workers abducted in the early hours of yesterday at the Brass terminal of the Nigerian Agip Oil Company by armed gunmen.

The state government in a statement signed by the Press Secretary to the governor, Mr. Ekiyor Welson alleged that the attack was carried out by youths from a neighbouring state. The state government the statement added, "is concerned about the situation and is doing everything possible to bring the situation under control.

"The state government also wishes to enjoin the oil company not to do anything that will jeopardize investigations as security agencies are already working on the situation."

SSPA asks political parties to back S-South's Presidential bid

By Emma Amaize & John Ighodaro

CALABAR—THE South-South Peoples Assembly (SSPA), which is the umbrella organisation of the people of the South-South geo-political zone, yesterday, at a special general meeting in Calabar, Cross River State requested all the political parties to give their Presidential slots for the 2007 general elections to South-South aspirants for the love of the nation.

The Assembly in a communiqué issued at the end of the meeting, which was designed to rekindle the Calabar Declaration of 2004, said after reviewing a number of issues, including the current developments in the country that

of the zone.

"The quest for the Presidency by the South-South zone is not predicated merely on the principle of power rotation but informed by the immense contributions and sacrifices of the zone to the unity of the country.

"We believe that we have eminently qualified reservoir of highly skilled and competent persons of exemplary managerial acumen to give Nigeria the right calibre of leadership.

"We believe that only a President of South-South extraction can save the Nigeria state from the perdition to which the country is presently headed; that the era of political contractors parading as leaders of the South-South people has ended.