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MEND, JTF in violent shoot-out

Written by Samuel Oyadongha, Yenagoa
 Saturday, 22 November 2008

The relative peace of the Bayelsa East senatorial district coastal enclave was again tested yesterday as members of the Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta and the military were locked in violent shoot out.

Saturday Vanguard learnt that the gunmen launched an attack on a navy houseboat protecting a Royal Dutch Shell crude oil flow station in the Nembe creek in the early hours of yesterday.

However no causality was reported during the clash around the Nembe Creek flow station the theatre of the skirmish.

The coordinator of the Joint Media Campaign of the military forces in the region Lt Col Rabe Abubakar while confirming the incident said no damage was done to the Shell facility.

But MEND in an online statement said its fighters in the early hours of yesterday attacked a military helicopter gunship that violated the airspace of one of its major camp in Bayelsa State .

The statement read, "About 1400 Hours today, November 20, 2008, a military helicopter gunship in camouflage colour entered the airspace of a major MEND camp in Bayelsa State and was shot at with heavy anti aircraft guns until a plume of black smoke trailed its hasty retreat.

"We are confident that the chopper has been badly damaged as it managed to escape. All units are on the lookout to ascertain it did not crash before getting to its base.

"This incident has prompted us to warn that any further provocation will result in the resumption of hostilities."

Meanwhile the group said it fighters were behind last weekend attack on Sangana in which about 13 persons were killed.

The group in a reply to Saturday Vanguard enquiry about the last weekend skirmish on the Atlantic fringe which heightened tension within communities around the Southern Ijaw and Brass council area MEND said it was provoked by the victims which it described as gang of pirates.

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