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Sailor dies in Niger Delta boat attack

**afrol News, 9 June** - At least one sailor was left dead and several others injured when gunmen on military boats assailed a patrol vessel working for Addax, a Canadian petroleum company in Nigeria's oil producing Niger-Delta region, today.

Reports show that the vessel which had a crew of eight on board was stormed by unknown attackers on speedboats while providing security for oil operations in the oil rich Delta area in southern Nigeria.

The boat was from Calabar region en-route to Onne, in Rivers state, when the assault stemmed.

Nigerian Navy spokesperson Henry Babalola reportedly said the attack was initially warded off by the crew and two of the attacking boats were sunk during the crossfire that ensued. The assailers are said to have returned later with a much heavier onslaught and boarded the vessel under siege.

Babalola noted that the navy had cordoned off the area where the incident occurred, while their units were busy searching for the pirating boats.

The President and Chief Executive Officer of Addax, Jean Claude Gandur, said "we are deeply saddened by this incident and our thoughts and prayers are with the victim's family and those of the injured personnel. We strongly believe that this unfortunate incident was a premeditated act by criminal elements seeking personal benefit," Mr Gandur added.

Nigeria is one of Africa's largest oil-producer, but frequent attacks in the Niger Delta oil pipelines by militants have dropped the produce by 25 percent.

Last month a rebel group, the Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (Mend) is reported to have attacked an oil pipeline belonging to Royal Dutch Shell in Rivers State.



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The rebel group is said to have stated that it was campaigning for a greater share of the region's oil wealth to be kept by local people, but the government says they are criminals motivated by the ransoms they receive from oil companies.

The remote and inaccessible streams of the Delta are frequented by criminals who hold oil workers for ransom money and attack oil installations. Piracy in Nigeria's waters has also increased in the last two years, making it one of the most dangerous shipping areas in the world.

Attacks on the oil industry have cut down about a quarter of Nigeria's production in the past two years, pushing global crude oil prices to highs never experienced before.

The Nigerian government has promised to hold a summit with the Niger Delta communities to try to resolve the piracy problem in the region soon.

*By staff writer*

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