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Youth Movements, Militancy and Militias

Militancy and Militias

Militancy refers to a combative and aggressive activism or engagement in struggles for identified causes. The involvement of youths in conflicts in Africa can be described as exercises in militancy, as they see themselves as involved in combative and aggressive activism against state and social inadequacies, which are contributing to their continued status as subalterns or to the denial of agency. In the Niger-delta, the term 'militants' refers to gunmen who make political demands, including the release of imprisoned leaders, cash reparations for communities, change of electoral candidates and a greater share of oil revenues, among other issues. These political demands distinguish them, albeit tenuously, from criminals who simply kidnap people for money. Militants are also distinct from disaffected communities, whose people may perform kidnappings or attacks in the hopes of getting a clinic, school or cash, but have no overall political aims. Militants in the Niger-delta display the following features:

- They are youths;
- They operate surreptitiously and clandestinely in cities and towns;
- They are sometimes known as activists;
- Are based in camps during the weekdays but return to towns and cities during the weekends;
- Their camps are established far from towns and cities, deep in the mangrove swamps;
- The camps are owned and controlled by bosses/commandants;
- The camps are numerous and each may comprise of 2,000 or more youth;
- The commandants obtain resources by extorting from the state and government, using security threats;

- They carry sophisticated arms such as machine guns, explosives and cluster bombs;
- They abuse alcohol (local gin) and Marijuana.

In pursuing their self-determination goals, youths in the Niger-delta have deployed two broad strategies – localised resistance involving protests; and rights seeking movements involving obstruction of access routes, petition writing, sending delegations to state governments and oil majors.

The forceful and repressive response of the Federal Government and oil companies to localised resistance by Niger-delta youths spurred the adoption of more overtly violent methods in form of attacks on state personnel and infrastructure such as police stations, army camps, government offices; attacks, blockage and shutting down of oil installations; and hostage taking. These direct action tactics create what is known as 'systems disruption'. These attacks, if properly targeted, can cause cascades of failures that sweep entire systems. The result is a paralysed economy that produces costs that far outstrip the costs of the attack. The success of systems disruption attacks has fueled the insurgency by creating economic chaos and radically decreased the legitimacy of both the Nigeria state and oil companies. The attacks are quite easy, inexpensive and safe. Almost none of infrastructure attackers have ever been caught or killed.

As pointed out above, existing side by side with militants, who are youths engaged in contentious collective rights action in the Niger-delta, are criminals who kidnap and kill for ransom. Militants have pursued their objectives through what can be described as 'anti-systemic' movements. These are groups that perceive systemic changes as virtually a *sine qua non* to their demands for structural change. They believe that the existing system is not beneficial to the lumpen as a whole and desire a change. They perceive that the objectives of the elites are highly parochial and not necessarily in the interest of the lumpen. They thus do not seek to advance their cause through the traditional access to elite influence; rather, they embrace militant, activist and extremist political tactics that seek to challenge the system itself and its governing rules.

In the Niger-delta, anti-systemic groups have taken the form of militias and cults. A militia is an armed, informal civilian group who are engaged in some paramilitary, security, crime and crime control functions in the projection or defense of communal, ethnic, religious and political causes. In the Niger-delta, there are two types of militia:

- i) The major ones, such as the Egbesu Boys of Africa, Niger-delta Peoples Volunteer Force, Federated Niger-delta Ijaw Communities (FNDIC), Niger-delta Vigilante (NDV) and the Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger-delta (MEND);

- ii) Community and Warlord-based militias, such as the Ijaw Freedom Fighters, Mobutu Boys, Niger-delta Freedom Fighters, the Atangbata Youths, the One More River to Cross Youths, the Olabrakon-Opre Youths, the Oweiesan-Ogbo, the Adaka Marine, the Ogbokore Youths, the Alagbada Youth of Kombo, and the Tomgbolo Boys.

Cults/Gangs

Like the militants, cults and gangs were originally formed to protest social injustice. Cults are groups of individuals dedicated to providing security and economic opportunities for each other and their respective communities, subscribing to an oath of allegiance and secrecy, and relying mostly on violent means to achieve their ends. Cult membership, methods of operation and initiation rites remain secret. Unlike the NDPVF or MEND, once an individual joins a cult, the person is in that cult for life, barring exceptional circumstances.

Cults are rigidly hierarchical. Not all cults are violent, although most of them are armed to varying degrees. Membership ranges from 20 to 3,000 persons. Some are pro-state or pro-government while some are anti-state, and there are others that have no clear political objectives. These days, cults have been taken over by criminal groups and individuals that use them to sell drugs, rig elections, and fight each other, among other activities. Many of these 'cult' groups, with names such as the Icelanders, Greenlanders, KKK, Germans, Dey Gbam, Mafia Lords and Vultures, were originally formed in the early 1990's as university fraternities, but later largely evolved into criminal gangs. The Secret Cult and Similar Activities Prohibition Law (hereafter Secret Cult Law) passed in June 2004 officially listed about 100 cult groups, which are now banned. These include criminal gangs, spiritual and politically motivated groups seeking power and control, gangs that control waterways and passages, as well as those involved in oil bunkering activities – all hiding under the guise of cultism.

The relationship between cults and ethnic militias is very close. Most ethnic militias are loose federations of cult groups. In late 2003, in an effort to increase their access to weapons and other resources, many of the cult groups formed alliances with either Asari or Tom's armed group as the two leaders fought for the control of oil bunkering routes. Although the smaller groups retained their names and leadership structures, Asari and Tom assumed command and control responsibilities over the militant actions of these smaller groups.

Table 1: List of Cult Groups Banned Under the Secret Cult and Similar Activities Prohibition Law 2004

Agbaye	Eagle Club	Nite Hawks
Airwords	Egbe Dudu	Nite Rovers
Amazon	Eiye of Air Lords Fraternity	Odu Cofraternity
Baccaneers (Sea Lords)	Elegemface	Osiri
Barracuda	Executioners	Ostrich Fraternity
Bas	Fangs	Panama Pyrate
Bees International	FF	Phoenix
Big 20	Fliers	Predators
Black Axe	Frigates	Red Devils
Black Beret Fraternity	Gentlemen's Club	Red Fishes
Black Brasserie	Green Berets Fraternity	Red Sea Horse
Black Brothers	Hard Candies	Royal House of Peace
Black Cats	Hell's Angels	Royal Queens
Black Cross	Hepos	Sailors
Black Ladies	Himalayas	Scavengers
Black Ofals	Icelanders	Scorpion
Black Scorpions	Jaggare Confederation	Scorpion Fraternity
Black Sword	KGB	Sea Vipers
Blanchers	King Cobra	Soiree Fraternity
Black Bras	KlamKonfraternity Klansman	Soko
Blood Hunters	Ku Klux Klan	Sunmen
Blood Suckers	Knite Cade	Temple of Eden Fraternity
Brotherhood of Blood	Mafia Lords	Thomas Sankara Boys
Burkina Faso: Revolution Fraternity	Mafioso Fraternity	Tikan Giants
Canary	Malcolm X	Trojan Horses Fraternity
Cappa Vandetto	Maphites /Maphlate	Truth Seekers
Daughters of Jezebel	Mgba Mgba Brothers	Twin mate
Dey Gbam	Mob Stab	Vikings
Dey Well	Musketeers Fraternity	Vipers
Dogs	National Association of Adventurers	Vultures
Dolphins	National Association of Sea	Walrus
Dragons	Neo-Black Movement	White Bishop
Dreaded Friends of Friends	Night Mates	

Objectives of the Militias

There is a convergence between the interests of the militia and those of the Niger-delta leaders. These, among others, are:

- i) A restructuring of the Nigerian state and its federalism in such a way that will guarantee:
 - a. Self determination;
 - b. Political autonomy and fiscal control;
 - c. True federalism;

- d. Community control over development strategies;
 - e. Protection of land, dignity, culture, freedom, environment and natural resources of the Niger-delta people;
 - f. The right of states and communities to resource control.
- ii) A broad based development programme to transform the region.
 - iii) A political autonomy that guarantees political participation, representation and community participation in resource management.
 - iv) Implementation of a minimum of 50 per cent derivation.
 - v) A halt to the development of new Oil and gas pending the complete clean up of the environment (Oderemi 2007:15)
 - vi) Achievement of Self determination and resource control to be addressed through a sovereign National Conference of ethnic nationalities.

Arms and their Sources

Given that the defining feature of militias and cults is their willing use of violence, the militia groups operating in Delta State – Ijaw, Itshekiri, and Urhobo – are well armed. For example, Asari stated in 2004 that he owned 67 boats, each armed with two light machine guns (*Newsmatch* 2004, 10) and more than 3,000 assault rifles (IRIN, 2004d). ‘General Commander’ of the NDPVF, British Columbus Epebada, once boasted, ‘we have the GPMG [general purpose machine gun], the SLR [self loading rifle], AK-47 Kalashnikovs, MG [machine guns] and several others. We have over five thousand arms among which the GPMG alone are up to 273’ (Abubakar and Bello 2004). Among the weapons in use are fully and semi-automatic rifles, shotguns, machine guns and shoulder-fired rockets (known as ‘bazookas’); as well as more traditional weapons such as fishing spears and cutlasses used for agriculture.

These weapons are readily available for purchase in Warri at prices that, according to investigation, range from around N80, 000 (U.S.\$570) for a shotgun or N120, 000 (\$850) for a Kalashnikov rifle, to around N300, 000 (\$2,150) for a ‘bazooka’ (Bisina 2003; Ebo 2003).

Table 2: Firearms Surrendered at Bori Camp, Port Harcourt,
7 October–30 November 2004

Assault Rifles	778
AK-47s	324
Czech SA Vz 58	429
HK C3	22
FN-FAL	22
Shotguns	3
Light Machine guns	19
Beretta125	12

MAT 49	2
Czech model 26	2
Sten MK 2	7
Machine guns	1
Czech model 59 (Rachol)	2
MG 36	1
Hunting rifles	3
Pistols	9
Revolvers	4
Craft weapons	17
Shotguns	10
Revolvers	7
Air guns	1
Total	1,675

A number of small arms originate from other war-ravaged parts of the West African sub-region, particularly Sierra Leone and Liberia. Members of the Nigerian military have reportedly brought back arms from Sierra Leone, where they took part in the war as part of the ECOWAS Monitoring Group (ECOMOG) for resale after being redeployed into the state (Musah and Thamson 1999).

Armed group supporters within the oil industry, or political parties and even members of the state government provided weapons or the funds and required contacts to buy them. Traditional leaders seeking protection from armed groups have also supplied weapons, including a local chief from Okrika who, Ateke claims, purchased weapons for the NDV (HRW 2005).

Weapons exchanged for stolen or bunkered oil are another major source. Illegal oil bunkering has reportedly been a significant source of revenue for both the NDPVF and the NDV. Weapons captured or seized from local stocks or bought from corrupt individuals also add to the armed group stockpiles. These include arms captured from (or sold by) the Nigeria Mobile Police and Nigerian Army personnel; those captured or bought from Cameroonian soldiers stationed in the Bakassi Peninsula (whose jurisdiction is disputed between Nigeria and Cameroon); and those purchased from ex-Nigerian soldiers also deployed to the same region.

One group leader claims that arms are available from vessels moored just off the coast of Rivers State, and can be purchased by anybody who can afford them. For example, Asari pointed out that 'We are very close to international waters, and it's very easy to get weapons from ships, we have AK-47s, general-purpose machine guns and rocket-propelled grenades'. Warri, the capital of Delta State, is also known as a major arms trafficking hub. Smugglers from Guinea-Bissau, Gabon and Cameroon reportedly use speedboats to reach off-shore ships and purchase guns, which they then sell to their respective communities in Warri, where they are often trafficked elsewhere (Obasi 2002).

While the presence of craft weapons among those surrendered in Port Harcourt provides evidence of the existence of an underground industry, there is little information available regarding products, production levels, or the quality and price of weapons. Today, Awka, the Anambra State capital, appears to be Nigeria's leading small arms manufacturing centre. There are also reports of Ghanaian gunsmiths traveling to Nigeria to train local blacksmiths in gun-making skills.

Arms are sent in by smugglers across the land borders of the neighbouring countries of Benin, Niger, Chad and Cameroon, through the Lagos-Benin coastal axis, extending across West Africa as far as Liberia and Sierra Leone and Nigeria's northern borders with Chad and Niger. Many of the arms smuggling rings operate out of Equatorial Guinea, Gabon, Cameroon and Nigeria (IRIN, May 2006). The smugglers use speedboats to connect with ships on the high seas, and then ferry the arms back to shore. Jailed militant leader Alhaji Dokubo-Asari confirmed this method to reporters in 2005, stating, 'We are very close to international waters, and it's very easy to get weapons from ships (IRIN 2006)'.

Some of the weapons in the armed groups' stockpiles are acquired after attacks on police and military outposts. During such attacks, the militant groups break into the police or military armories and cart away arm. Corrupt security officials also sell weapons to militants. Before the April 2007 elections, for example, politicians in Niger State imported massive amounts of arms for their 'security detachments' (which also likely went to thugs hired to help rig the elections) (*Vanguard*, April 13, 2007).

Funding of the Militias

Armed militia groups in the Niger-delta get funds for their purchase of arms through oil bunkering. Government and oil-industry officials say groups like Dokubo's NDPVF and MEND, which have popped up in the region in recent years, fund their weapon purchases by tapping crude oil from pipelines into barges for illegal sale to tankers waiting offshore. Nigeria was estimated at one time to be losing as much as 10 per cent of its daily oil exports through such thefts, which are locally known as bunkering.

The process of 'illegal bunkering' entails loading crude oil (or/and petroleum products) into barges in the labyrinthine creeks of the Niger Delta, directly from oil field production wellheads, or from NNPC jetties at Okrika, Calabar, Effurun, Escravos, Atlas Cove (Lagos), or from a myriad of private outlets. Oil bunkering is a criminal offence under the Special Tribunal (Miscellaneous Offences) Decree No. 20, 1984. The decree prescribes very stiff penalties, including death by firing squad, revocation of licences, and forfeiture of both fixed and moveable assets, for offences. The scope of the decree covers willful, or malicious obstruction, damage, destruction, tampering or interference with the free flow of crude oil and/or refined petroleum products.

From the coastal states of Nigeria, specifically in the swamps of the Niger-delta in Delta, Rivers, Cross River, Akwa Ibom, Ondo and Bayelsa States, large inventories of stolen crude oil or petroleum products are typically trans-shipped into larger ocean-faring marine vessels, waiting patiently on stand-by, either mid-stream, or offshore, for their booty. In the hinterland of Nigeria, particularly in Abia, Benue, Delta, Enugu, Edo, Kogi, Ondo, Lagos and Ogun States, large inventories of refined petroleum products (petrol, kerosene and diesel oil) are loaded directly into tanker trucks from the point of deliberate rupture of petroleum product pipelines that traverse the length and breadth of Nigeria.

Flowing directly from the issue of oil bunkering is that of control of territory. Funds from oil bunkering are dependent on an ethnic militia maintaining control of territory through which pipelines pass through, and making efforts to expand such territory. In other words, the territory becomes sacred to ethnic militias and struggle over its control lies at the heart of the dynamics of ethnic militia actions in the Niger-delta.

For example, much of the violence in 2004 around Port Harcourt appears to have been motivated by struggles to control the oil territory and bunkering routes. A state government spokesman told Human Rights Watch that the conflict between Asari and Tom was likely based on 'disagreements over business transactions and contracts for protecting barges that lift crude oil' (HRW 2005).

Some of the most intense fights between October 2003 and October 2004 centred around villages located on tributaries about twenty to forty kilometers southwest of Port Harcourt, including Buguma, Bukuma, Tombia and Ogbakiri. This is Asari's home area and the site of several oil wells, flow stations and gas gathering projects operated by Shell Petroleum Development Company in the Cawthorne Channel. The violence in Tombia and Bukuma (which are a few kilometers apart) escalated in October 2003 when members of the Germans 'cult' group killed a leader of the Dey Gbam 'cult'.

Both sides claim that after this incident, members of their group were forced to flee Tombia and Bukuma, seeking refuge in Port Harcourt. In late 2003, Dey Gbam formed an alliance with Asari's NDPVF and the Germans formed an alliance with Tom's NDV. Although members of Dey Gbam and the Germans sought assistance to facilitate their return to their villages, Asari and Tom were most likely interested in manipulating a local dispute to gain control of Tombia and Bukuma because of their proximity to lucrative bunkering routes in the Cawthorne Channel.

According to fighters interviewed by Human Rights Watch, both Asari and Tom armed their new recruits with sophisticated weapons and speedboats in late 2003.

The Niger-delta crisis is essentially an exercise in contentious politics, as it involved a marginalised identity group within the Nigerian state engaging the state, through movement action, in a struggle to enforce their fundamental rights as citizens of the Nigerian state. Niger-delta agitations took a violent turn because

of the political constraints imposed by the state on the people's contentious collective action. The frustration such constraints generated transformed the element of rebellion inherent in all contentious collective action into hatred and violence. Youths have played a leading role in the violent phase of Niger-delta contentious collective action because they are most affected by situation of powerlessness, which state oppression aggravates. For them, violence becomes a bargaining weapon for negotiating, legitimising or violating (oppressive) public order.

The Militias and the Civil Struggle: Interfaces

Youth-elite relations in the Niger-delta is characterised by distrust and suspicion. For example, since the mid-1990s, youth groups have grown more powerful and resentful towards village chiefs. In some areas, youth groups who did not benefit from the largesse handed out, have increasingly accused local chiefs of working with both oil companies and the government to oppress, exploit and neglect them. In 2000, at Ewreni, youths accused their traditional ruler, the Ovie, of 'cornering' much of the money given to the community by oil multinationals for various social and developmental projects. The disagreement soon degenerated into a 'regicide' as the youths attacked the Ovie, killed him, tied him to a car and dragged the body through the town in the ultimate humiliation for a monarch. For the Ijaw Pro-Active Leadership Council, Niger-delta elites are traitors, as:

They went to bed with the devil ... sowed their seed with the enemy ... colluded with the devil to spill the bloods of our innocent mothers, fathers and brethren in Odi, Odioma and indeed Ijawnation. They colluded with the devil to defraud Ijawnation and deprive Ijawnation of her rightful resources and revenue; resources that our youths gallantly gave their lives for in Kaiama and all over Ijawland. Now the time has come 'they must reap what they have sown'. The bloods of the innocent are crying for justice. All the perpetrators of the tragedy and massacre at Odi, Odioma and numerous other Ijaw towns will not know peace until justice is served.

But beyond these strains, the militias respect, liaise with, reach out to or listen to ethnic and political leaders who are acknowledged to demonstrate understanding to the conditions of the people, commitment to the people's improvements and patriotism and zeal to the cause of the ethnic group and region. Among these leaders are chief Edwin Clark, Alabo Tonye Graham- Douglas, Chief Dumo Lulu-Briggs, Chief Paver Ziakede Aginighan and the leaders of the Ijaw National Congress. The militias are loyal to the ethnic leaders, and they extend elements of camp discipline to community and influential leaders. But this applies only to those acknowledged and committed leaders the Ijaw struggle.

Another issue here is how the militia groups relate to the youth movement or organizations. In Ijawland, the apex youth organisation is the Ijaw Youth Council (IYC), to which the militias are affiliated in principle. The IYC membership is predominantly composed of graduates, and it denounces unnecessary self-interest

actions. The IYC is still respected and acknowledged as the co-ordinating youth body of the Ijaws, and plays the leadership role in the youth conduct of the struggle.

It should be noted too that the educated ones are in the forefront of the steering of the struggle. They are the influential links between the militias and the government and ethnic leaders. They live in the cities, relate with the town and camp, moderate and leverage over the militias, but they are more of supporters. The ethnic and political leaders and educated youth leaders mediate in the struggle between government, MNOCs and the militias/community.

The 2005–2007 Youth Insurgency

The heightened insurgency since December 2005, has been associated with the arrest, incarceration and trial of Asari Dokubo, regarded as a 'flag bearer of the Niger Delta and leading light of the Ijaw nation' in September 2005 (*Daily Independent* 13 June 2007). The militants demand his un-conditional release and have timed and targeted attacks in response to developments in the trial by a Federal High Court, for treasonable felony. His major role in the struggle is demonstrated by the fact that the militants announced a cessation of hostilities and released some hostages following his release on bail, as part of a political solution on Thursday June 14 2007 (*Saturday Independent* 16 June 2007).

Since December 2005, when a more insurgent phase of the struggle began, about 200 foreign nationals have been kidnapped but released, while numerous foreigners have fled the region. About a quarter of national oil production has been closed (see Appendix 1).

A major strategy of the insurgents, since the late 1990s, is the directive to foreign oil workers and the oil companies to leave the region. Kidnapping and abduction of oil workers is calculated to force the oil companies and staff to leave the region. That the current spate of kidnapping is linked to the directive to leave the region was recently succinctly put by Dokubo Asari: 'we asked them to leave our land, but they refused and sided with the Nigerian military, believing that the Army would protect them... the foreign oil workers should leave our land peacefully and come back peacefully when we might have resolved our differences with the governments' (*Daily Independent* 18 June 2007).

Therefore in a sense, kidnapping is a reprisal against the foreign oil workers for failing to heed militia directives and warnings. Apart from kidnapping, there have been attacks on pipelines, such as the Soku-Buguma-Alakiri pipeline between May and June 2007.

Most militias are involved in bunkering. They use the money to run the camps and purchase arms. Bunkering by freedom fighters is for sustaining the struggle. Bunkering by criminal militias/militia leaders is for self enrichment.

Table 3: Selected Cases of Major Attacks on Nigerian Oil Industry in 2006 and 2007

Date	Actions	Oil companies oil servicing companies involved	Reasons	Outcome
January 10, 2006	-Kidnapping of four (4) staff. - Blow up of crude oil pipelines.	Shell offshore E. A. Oil field	-	Militants tree hostages on January 30 but threaten new wave of attacks.
February 13, 2006	- Militants attack a barge operated by us oil services company and abduct 9 oil workers. - Blow up of crude oil pipeline and a gas pipeline. - Bomb Forcados loading plat form. - Mili	Willbros Shell NNPC Shell	- March 27, 2006, militants release three remaining hostages kidnapped February 18	Suspension pf export from the 380,000 bpd facility shell shut 115,000 bpd E. A. plat form as precaution. March 1, 2006 militant release 6 of the hostages kidnapped February 18: 1 American, 2 Egyptians, 2 Thais ad 1 Filipino 2 Americans and 1 Briton
March, 18 2006	Militants blow up oil pipeline	Italian oil company Agip	-	Shut down of 75,000 bpd facility.
March 10, 2006	Killing of an oil executive in port Harcourt	Baker Hughes (an American Co.)	-	-
May 11, 2006	Kidnap of 3 oil workers	- Italian Oil Contractor Saipem	-	-
June 2, 2006	- Abduction of 6 Britons 1 Canadian and an American from Bulford Dolphin oil rig.	Norwegian oil filed services group Fred Olsen Energy	-	Hostages are released two days later
June 7, 2006	Militants attack a natural gas facility in the Niger Delta. - kill 6 Soldiers - kidnap 5 South Korean contractors	Shell	-	
June 20 2006	- Kidnap of 2 filipinos in Port Harcourt	Beaufort international	-	Freed 5 days later
July 6, 2006	- Gunmen kidnap Michael Los, a Dutch oil worker in Bayelsa State.	-	-	Released 4 days later
July 25, 2006	- Attack of flow station and 24 workers taken hostage	Agip	-	Hostages released and flow station abandoned July 31 after pay off by Nigerian government
August 3, 2006	- German oil worker Guido Schiffarth, a 62 year old, snatched from his car in Port Harcourt by men dressed as soldiers.	Bilfinger and Berger	-	Released on August, 19, 2006
August 4, 2006	- Gunmen abduct 3 Filipino oil workers from a bus near Port Harcourt	-	-	They are released 10 days later.
August 7, 2006	- 2 Norwegian and 2 Ukrainian oil workers kidnapped	-	-	Freed on August 15 th , 2006

Table 3: Selected Cases of Major Attacks on Nigerian Oil Industry in 2006 and 2007 (Cont'd.)

August 10, 2006	- A Belgian and a Moroccan contractors kidnapped in Port Harcourt	-	-	Both released August 14 th
August 13, 2006	- 5 foreign oil workers (2 Britons, a German, an Irish and a pole) Kidnapped from a night club in port Harcourt. - An American also kidnapped earlier the same day.	-	-	-
August 16, 2006	- Lebanese man kidnapped	-	-	-
August 24, 2006	- An Italian oil worker is kidnapped by gunmen in Port Harcourt.	Saipem	-	He is freed 5 days later.
October 2, 2006	- 25 Nigerian oil employees seized after an ambush of boats carrying supplies to shell facilities in the Caw Thorne channel.	Royal Dutch Shell contractor	-	They are released two days later.
October 3, 2006	- 7 foreign oil worker (four Britons, one Indonesian one Malaysian and a Romanian) kidnapped in a raid on a compound for expatriated contractors	Exxon Mobil	-	All of them released on October, 21.
November 2, 2006	A British and an American employees are kidnapped from a survey ship off the coast of Bayelsa.	Petroleum Geo-services (PGS)	-	Freed on November 7, 2006
November 22, 2006	- A British oil worker is killed during an attempt by Nigerian soldiers to free 7 hostages abducted by militants earlier the same day.	-	-	-
December 7, 2006	- Gunmen kidnap three Italians and one Lebanese from a residential facility	-	-	-
December 14, 2006	- Gunmen invade the Nun river logistics base in Bayelsa state and hold 5 people hostage.	Royal Dutch Shell	-	-
December 18, 2006	- 2 car bombs explode in Port Harcourt in an oil company and oil company residential compound. There were no casualties	- Agip - Shell	-	-
December 21, 2006	- Militants storm the Obigi filed facility in rivers state, killing 3 people.	Total	-	-

Table 3: Selected Cases of Major Attacks on Nigerian Oil Industry in 2006 and 2007 (Cont'd.)

January 5, 2007	Gunmen kidnap 5 Chinese telecom worker. - Militants plant a car bomb in an oil company residential compound in Port Harcourt	Shell	-	- Shell evacuates Some Staff From Compounds In Port Harcourt, Bonny Island and Warri. - Gunmen, free 5 Chinese telecom workers on January 18 2007. - An Italian is also released. 3 foreign hostages remain in captivity.
January 10, 2007	- Gunmen attacked a base in Bayelsa state kidnapping a South Korean and one Nigerian oil worker	South Korea's Daewoo Engineering and construction.	-	Freed on January 12, 2007.
January 16, 2007	- 3 people including a Dutch oil worker are killed when their boat was attacked by gunmen on its	South Korean firm Hyundai	-	-

Shell experienced a decline by about 457,00 bpd production in the western Delta in 2006. Several of its employees were kidnapped, pipeline destroyed, facilities seized. About 20 – 25 per cent of Nigeria's oil output has been cut since 2006. Shell sacked 1,500 staff in 2004 and was planning to lay off 3,500 in mid-2007, as a result of high operational costs and worsening security and production short of over 500,000 bpd in the western Delta alone, as a result of the crisis (Adebayo 2007:11).

The development of the region has been affected, as projects executed by foreign contractors such as road construction in the eastern Delta, drainage projects and Mile One Market in Port Harcourt have been abandoned for fear of kidnapping (*Sunday Independent* 17 June 2007). Foreign countries such as the USA, UK and Philippines have asked their citizens to leave the region (*Daily Independent* 17 June 2007), such is the magnitude of the crises, that the then president, Umaru Musa Yar'Adua declared its resolution as a major agenda.

The Obasanjo administration adopted a three-pronged approach: military action, accelerated development of the region, and engagement. The Yar'Adua administration, on the other hand, planned to redress the developmental and environmental challenges. The Federal Government was alleged to have approved USD 2 billion, for the purchase of arms to quell the Niger Delta Crisis in January 2007 (*The Punch* 31 June 2007).

There have been extensive and intensive military deployments since the late 1990s, co-ordinated under various acronyms and currently as Joint Military Task Force or Operation Restore Hope. The Nigerian Army and the militants have recorded successes and failures in the ongoing hostilities. In several instances, the militants have overpowered the military and taken over oil installations and vessels, while the military have on occasions stormed militant held facilities, dislodged militants and rescued oil workers.

For example, in Ogboinbiri (Ijaw South LGA), Bayelsa, there were gun battles in June 2007, between the military and the militants. The military had flagged down a militant boat that defied a river check point. In the ensuing clash, nine militants were killed and their guns and ammunitions confiscated (*Daily Independent* 14 June 2007). But the militias retaliated on 17th June 2007. They stormed and took over AGIP oil facility in Ogoinbiri and chased the military away and held twelf workers hostage (*Daily Independent* 18 June 2007).

The military, according to the former Chief of Defence staff, General Agwai, is capable of crushing the militant uprising, but for restraints and mandates which have included dialogue rather than all-out force (*Daily Independent* 9 June 2007).

The state governments and political leaders in the region have been the major actors in the resolution of local conflicts. Even since the present administration began on 29 May 2007, the Bayelsa State Government has for example, negotiated and secured the release of twelf expatriate hostages and one Nigerian, after between fourteen and thirty-eight days of kidnap, in Ijaw South LGA (*Daily Independent* 14 June 2007). Similarly, the Rivers State governor secured the release of two hostages after being held for twenty-four days. Another nineteen hostages were released to him on 16 June 2007.

These releases are based on dialogue or negotiation and payment of ransoms. The Bayelsa State governor, Mr. Timipre Sylva, personally visited the militant camps twice in June 2007 in the creeks, discussed with militia leaders and secured the release of hostages held in the camps (Abermudu 2007:Avi). The state governments have also put in place several programmes to address the insurgency. These among others are the new Rivers State Government's 3E Approach: Engagement, Education and Empowerment (*Daily Independent* 14 June 2007). In Bayelsa State, the government is seeking re-orientation, skills acquisition and employment.