

## INTERNATIONAL

# Nigerian army steps in local battle for oil benefits

By Gabriel Packard

LAGOS, Nigeria (GIN)—The Nigerian army is battling for control of the oil-producing Niger-Delta region after the ethnic Ijaw people unsettled the area with more than a week of attacks on oil facilities and rival communities.

The Ijaw are demanding greater political representation in next month's elections, and a greater share of the oil wealth that is generated from what they say is traditionally their land.

Because of the fighting, Nigeria, the world's sixth-largest oil exporter, has cut its production by a third because TotalFinaElf, Chevron Texaco, and Shell—the three main oil companies in the Niger-Delta area—have stopped production.

In all, oil multinationals

have cut an unprecedented 800,000 barrels in daily oil production, or 40 percent of the West African nation's normal total of 2 million barrels a day.

Nigeria is the world's sixth-largest exporter, and the fifth-biggest supplier of U.S. oil imports. Nigeria's shut-downs, accompanied by market fears of a prolonged war in Iraq, caused oil prices to rise Monday.

On last Sunday night, Chevron announced it was shutting down nearly all of its remaining onshore and offshore operations in Nigeria, cutting 440,000 barrels of oil a day, along with 285 million cubic feet of natural gas per day.

The specter of further shut-downs was raised Monday by the blue-collar National Union of Petroleum and Gas



Soldiers deployed to restore order stop and search people in Warri, Nigeria, last week. The Niger Delta area has been under high security amid tension since the outbreak of ethnic clashes between Ijaws, Itsekiri and soldiers which has led to the destruction of various communities, scores of lives lost and thousands of people displaced.

Workers of Nigeria, which asked its members to leave facilities belonging to Shell and Nigeria's state-owned petroleum and gas companies.

The Ijaws, whose eight million people represent the largest ethnic group in the delta, have long accused President Olusegun Obasanjo of colluding with minority Itsekiris to draw up voting boundaries unfavorable to them.

Last week, the army arrested 17 youths accused of involvement in the conflict, which has killed at least six soldiers and five civilians so far.

Refugees leaving Ijaw villages say that the Nigerian military is holding them under siege with troops and navy ships firing on their settlements.

## U.N. Security Council adopts new resolution on small arms

By Saeed Shabazz

UNITED NATIONS (NPA)—Following a recent daylong, high-level meeting chaired by Foreign Minister Francois Lonseny Fall of Guinea, the United Nations Security Council adopted a resolution containing a declaration that emphasizes how the unchecked spread of small arms and mercenary activities contribute to serious violations of human rights and international law, which the Security Council condemned.

UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan told the Security Council: "Unless adequately addressed, the proliferation of small arms and mercenaries will continue to pose a severe threat to the region's hopes of attaining durable peace."

Among the more than 20 speakers that took part in the council's discussion was Nana Effah Apenteng of Ghana, who holds the chairmanship of the Economic Commission of West African States (ECOWAS). He told the 15-member body that, of the 500 million light weapons believed to be in circulation worldwide, perhaps as many as 30 million were in use in Africa—eight million in West Africa alone.

Mohamed Chambas, ECOWAS executive secretary, said the West African alliance remained engaged with issues surrounding the "twin devils" of small arms and mercenaries. But, he said

that ECOWAS could not do it alone and appealed to the Security Council and international community to help establish an ECOWAS controlled, well-resourced small arms information and monitoring unit.

Said Djinnit, a commissioner for the African Union, said ECOWAS had put in place a 1998 moratorium on imports, exports and manufacture of weapons by regional states.

Djinnit asked, "How can it be that these scourges still ravage our continent, despite national and regional legislation to stop it?"

Mercenaries ravaged Africa in the 1970s and 1980s and have reappeared in West Africa as a result of general instability, with a number of trouble spots and the ready availability of small arms, he added. Situations have been aggravated by mercenaries hired by corporations, including mining companies, and governments under siege.

A researcher for Human Rights Watch, who asked to remain anonymous, said her research showed a very close relationship between Shell Oil managers and Nigerian security forces, and that it is quite probable Shell purchased weapons for use by these forces.

Testifying before a Nigerian government commission in late January 2001, Lawrence Mitee, a representative of the Ogoni people in southern Nigeria, accused

Shell Oil of providing Nigerian paramilitary forces with weapons that were used to oppress his people during an uprising from 1993-1995. Shell admitted, to the Associated Press, to providing private sector forces with weapons for self-defense. However, observers note that it is difficult to trace paper trails that involve payments to the mercenary organizations.

Analysts say there is still a lucrative market in western Africa for Private Military Companies (PMC). Henry Sanchez, a researcher for the Center for Democracy and Development at Rutgers University in New Jersey, said PMCs, such as Military Professional and Resources Inc., Executive Outcomes, Sandline International and the Vinnell Corp., are still active in Sierra Leone, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Angola.

The Los Angeles Times, in an article published in April 2002, predicted the international security market would mushroom from \$56 billion in 1990 to \$220 billion by 2010. This was before the boost given to the industry before Sept. 11, 2001. The British Foreign and Commonwealth Office released a paper Feb. 12 in support of regulating the private military sector. Quoted in Defense News, the paper said: "The demand for private military services is likely to increase."

Chambas said the primary

objective of ECOWAS is to ensure economic integration and development in West Africa. However, the inextricable link between development and peace and security has meant an increasingly greater role for ECOWAS in conflict management and prevention, but at a great financial toll. He called on nations to take necessary steps to disallow use of their territories for rebel or mercenary activities. At the same time, activists in the United Kingdom are protesting the growth of

the British arms trade industry.

"On the one hand, the government is talking about the urgent need for constructive development in Africa, while on the other hand, government departments are underwriting or assisting arms dealers to sell weapons on the continent," said Richard Bingley of the London-based Campaign Against Arms Trade (CAAT).

According to CAAT, British arms deals increased from 52 million pounds (\$81.4

million) in 1999 to more than 200 million pounds (\$313.1 million) in 2003.

"There has been a tangible increase in arms export activity under the government of Tony Blair, and it's likely this pattern will soar in the next few years," Bingley stressed.

Sir Jeremy Greenstock, the UK ambassador to the UN, in answer to questions about British arms sales to West Africa, said: "The United Kingdom encourages (See Resolution, Page 15)

As you go through life, you meet maybe a handful of people who are memorable. People who have a gift, who develop that gift, and who use it for the good of others. Meet one of them now.

Meet Dr. Owen W. Justice, Jr.



Dr. Owen W. Justice, Jr.

Serving Las Vegas for over 19 years

**Cheyenne-Decatur Dental**

The personal touch in leading-edge care

(702) 648-6800

3226 N. Decatur • Las Vegas, NV 89130