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29 September 2009

NGA103268.E

Nigeria: Whether the Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND) forcibly recruits local oil workers; actions of the government to combat such recruitment and protection available

Research Directorate, Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada, Ottawa

Information indicating whether the Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND) engages in forcible recruitment of local oil workers could not be found among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate. For more on recruitment practices by MEND and other Nigerian militant groups, please refer to Response to Information Request NGA103175.E of 16 June 2009.

MEND has, however, engaged in the kidnapping of oil workers (Peel 12 Sept. 2009; BBC 15 May 2009; Xinhua 14 Sept. 2008). MEND has taken Nigerian as well as foreign oil workers hostage (BBC 18 May 2009; Xinhua 14 Sept. 2008). MEND has also conducted attacks against the oil industry infrastructure in Nigeria, but reportedly it has issued warnings to foreign and Nigerian oil workers to evacuate before at least some of its attacks (AFP 6 June 2009; UN 19 Sept. 2008; Reuters 15 Sept. 2008; AFP 17 Sept. 2008).

Some sources report that the practice by militant groups of "oil bunkering" - stealing oil and selling it on the black-market - requires professional assistance, at least initially (Council on Foreign Relations Sept. 2009, 10; BBC 27 July 2008; *VQR* Winter 2007). A sociologist in Port Harcourt was quoted by the *Virginia Quarterly Review* as saying that "no illegal bunkering would take place without [assistance]" (ibid.). Sources report that former oil workers have provided MEND with willing assistance (BBC 27 July 2008; *VQR* Winter 2007). According to the Council on Foreign Relations, militants have now developed sufficient expertise that they no longer have to rely on outsiders for assistance with oil bunkering (Sept. 2009, 10).

Information on actions undertaken by the government against forcible recruitment of oil workers by MEND could not be found among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate.

This Response was prepared after researching publicly accessible information currently available to the Research Directorate within time constraints. This Response is not, and does not purport to be, conclusive as to the merit of any particular claim for refugee protection. Please find below the list of sources consulted in researching this Information Request.

References

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<<http://english.peopledaily.com.cn/90001/90777/90855/6499385.html>> [Accessed 14 Sept. 2009]

Additional Sources Consulted

Publications: Behind the Mask: Explaining the Emergence of the MEND Militia in Nigeria's Oil-Bearing Niger Delta; Curse of the Black Gold: 50 Years of Oil in the Niger Delta; Emerging Requirements for U.S. Counterinsurgency: An Examination of the Insurgency in the Niger River Delta Region; Small Arms, Armed Violence, and Insecurity in Nigeria: The Niger Delta Perspective; Youth Militias, Self Determination and Resource Control Struggles in the Niger-Delta Region of Nigeria.

Internet sources, including: Afrique en ligne, Amnesty International (AI), Daily Trust [Nigeria], Human Rights Watch (HRW), Human Security Gateway, International Crisis Group, Jane's Information Group, Pambazuka News, The Jamestown Foundation, STRAFOR, Time Magazine, UNHCR Refworld, Upstream Online, United States (US) Department of State, Vanguard [Laos, Nigeria].

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