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**RRT RESEARCH RESPONSE**

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**Questions**

- 1. Please provide information on the Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND), and its related organisation, the Niger Delta People Volunteer Force (NDPVF) including the dates when they were founded, their leaders and their activities.**
- 2. Could either organisation be regarded as “Peaceful and non-violent”?**

**RESPONSE**

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The information provided in this research response has been divided under the headings NDPVF and MEND. Information has also been provided on MEND’s origins, aims, structure and leadership and activities.

**NDPVF**

Reports indicate that the Niger Delta People Volunteer Force (NDPVF) is a militant youth organisation created in late 2003 by Mujahid Dokubo-Asari. Sources report that prior to the arrest of Asari in September 2005, the group was involved in oil siphoning, attacking oil company infrastructure and fighting with rival gangs. In September 2004, the NDPVF declared an “all-out war” against the Nigerian government and demanded that international oil companies in the Niger Delta cease operating. Sources report that following the arrest of Asari the group fractured and some former NDPVF members formed the Movement for the

Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND). Asari was released from jail in June 2007. Reports indicate that he has since entered into peace talks with President Yar'Adua and has called on militants in the Niger Delta to end hostage taking and other violent activity. However, the International Crisis Group report that Asari's influence over Niger Delta militant groups has diminished due to his criticism of MEND. Asari also reportedly warned the government in November 2007 that the NDPVF ceasefire is temporary and will end if provoked (Marquardt, E. 2007, 'Mujahid Dokubo-Asari: The Niger Delta's Ijaw Leader', *Terrorism Monitor*, Jamestown Foundation website, vol. 5, no. 15, 2 August <http://www.jamestown.org/terrorism/news/article.php?articleid=2373587> – Accessed 11 January 2008 – Attachment 1; International Crisis Group 2007, *Nigeria: Ending unrest in the Niger Delta*, ICG Africa Report No.135, 5 December, pp.2-3 – Attachment 2; Ojeifo, S 2007, 'Asari Dokubo Slams Yar'Adua Over Obasanjo', *This Day*, 6 November, allAfrica.com website <http://allafrica.com/> – Accessed 30 January 2008 – Attachment 3).

A recent report in *Terrorism Monitor*, a journal by the Jamestown Foundation, describes the formation of the NDPVF in late 2003 by Mujahid Dokubo-Asari. The report provides an overview of the militant activities of the NDPVF, the arrest of Asari in September 2006, the subsequent fracturing of the NDPVF and the creation of MEND. Asari was released in June 2007 in a gesture of conciliation by the new Nigerian President, Umaru Yar'Adua. *Terrorism Monitor* provides the following information on the NDPVF and its leader Asari:

Among the restive Ijaw population in Nigeria's troubled, energy-rich delta region, one man stands alone as the most recognizable face of resistance: Mujahid Dokubo-Asari. Asari has been a central figure in the Ijaw cause, forming in late 2003 one of the delta's most notorious Ijaw militant groups, the Niger Delta People's Volunteer Force (NDPVF). Through this militant youth organization, Asari fought rival gangs, siphoned oil and gas from pipelines, destroyed energy infrastructure and declared an "all-out war" on the Nigerian state. Despite his arrest in September 2005, Asari continued to communicate with his followers, and he became an important symbolic figure for various Ijaw armed groups in the delta. These groups listed Asari's detention as one of their core grievances against the Nigerian state. On June 14, 2007, partially in an effort to pacify Ijaw demands, the newly-installed government of President Umaru Yar'Adua released Asari from prison.

...It is not known when exactly the NDPVF was created, as Asari himself has said that the "date of the founding of the organization cannot be precise," yet the general time frame is in late 2003.

...In order to fund the operations of the NDPVF, Asari and his men siphoned oil and gas from pipelines in the delta—an act that is locally known as "bunkering." Asari justified energy theft on the grounds that the resources belong to the people of the delta, rather than the federal government.

Oil and gas bunkering remained the critical component behind Asari's and the NDPVF's acquisition of sophisticated arms to conduct their operations.

...Like most of the political-militant groups in the delta, the NDPVF drew its ranks from disaffected youth, and brought under its umbrella various youth confraternities, also known as cult groups. In late 2004, senior NDPVF members explained the process of how small confraternities and gangs would operate under the NDPVF's banner, keeping their separate leadership structures intact, yet surrendering command and control to the NDPVF. At its height, the NDPVF attacked energy infrastructure, rival gangs and siphoned oil and gas from pipelines.

Odili and the government were threatened by Asari's creation of the NDPVF. By September 2004, the NDPVF had announced an "all-out war" against the Nigerian state, turning the former collaborators into enemies. In addition to directing the Nigerian security services at the NDPVF, Odili allegedly employed another delta militant, Ateke Tom, to use his private militia as part of the fight. Ateke Tom created the Niger Delta Vigilantes— which largely drew men from his cult gang known as the Icelanders (German)—and waged war against Asari's NDPVF. The two groups fought over territory and access to lucrative energy bunkering routes.

By late 2004, instability in the delta was rising rapidly, and, at the end of September, Asari's NDPVF issued an ultimatum to multinational energy companies to shut down their operations by October 1, otherwise their employees would become targets in a major guerrilla operation called Operation Locust Feast (IRIN, October 4, 2004).

The announcement sparked panic among energy companies and caused the price of oil to shoot to a new record of \$50 per barrel. As a result, the government of Olusegun Obasanjo was forced to recognize Asari's influence in the delta by inviting him and his rival, Ateke Tom, to Abuja in order to reach an agreement on the cessation of hostilities. A deal was reached on October 1 that was supposed to lead to the disbanding of their respective militia groups and their total disarmament as well as to keep them within the democratic process (*Business Day Africa*, October 8, 2004). Although some of the deal was implemented, it soon fell apart.

On September 20, 2005, Nigerian authorities arrested Asari on charges of treason and imprisoned him at the federal security services headquarters in Abuja. His arrest came after he issued persistent separatist rhetoric.

...Furthermore, in the wake of his detention, violence in the delta actually escalated. It appears that the NDPVF fractured, and former fighters conducted attacks in the name of the Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND) and other armed groups. (Marquardt, E. 2007, 'Mujahid Dokubo-Asari: The Niger Delta's Ijaw Leader', *Terrorism Monitor*, Jamestown Foundation website, vol. 5, no. 15, 2 August <http://www.jamestown.org/terrorism/news/article.php?articleid=2373587> – Accessed 11 January 2008 – Attachment 1).

A report by the International Crisis Group (ICG) dated December 2007 describes the actions of NDPVF leader, Asari, after his release from prison in June 2007. In July 2007 Asari entered into dialogue with the government and called upon militants to stop taking hostages and to allow the government to implement its plans to improve conditions in the Niger Delta. However, according to the ICG Asari's calls have had limited influence over Niger Delta militants because of friction between Asari and MEND and general disunity among militant groups. The ICG reports that:

**The new government's third major strategy has been dialogue with militant groups.** On 28 June 2007, Vice President Jonathan travelled to the Delta to talk with militant leaders at Okerenkoko, in Warri South Local Government Area, Delta State.

...Two weeks later, Jonathan invited Asari to the presidential villa in Abuja. **The freed NDPVF leader emerged from the talks to call on fellow militants to stop hostage-taking and other violence and give the government a chance to implement its plans for ending conflicts and reversing decades of injustice in the Delta.** Jonathan subsequently met with other senior militants.

**These talks have not been as productive as the government expected because they have been complicated by the militants' disunity. Soon after Asari was freed, he and Okah, a leading MEND figure, began to trade charges.** In July, after Asari called for cooperation with the government, he was called "an informant and a spy for the Nigerian government"[by MEND]. Following Okah's arrest in Angola, Asari said he was neither the leader nor even a member of MEND but was hired for N100 million (\$800,000) monthly by an ex-governor of a Niger Delta state, had tried to eliminate him while he was in jail and wanted to discredit the Delta struggle: "...a petty criminal and opportunist", who should be held responsible for many violent crimes in the Niger Delta.

Asari's comments on Okah and his characterisation of MEND's threat to launch fresh attacks as criminal have drawn fire from other militant leaders, further deepening cracks in the movement. Comrade Jonjon Oyenife, a former IYC president who is talking with the government, called "Asari-Dokubo...a big disappointment to most of us" and his comments a "betrayal of Ijaws".

**Asari has lost much influence among fighters in the creeks.** The snatching of his jeep by armed men on the streets of Port Harcourt in mid-July was indicative. Since 26 July, he has largely stayed out of the region, saying he does not want to be drawn into the conflicts in that city. A source asked: "If Asari can no longer guarantee his own safety in Port Harcourt, how can he venture to meet with the boys in the creeks? And if he is out of touch with the boys, how can he claim to be negotiating a peace deal on their behalf?" (International Crisis Group 2007, *Nigeria: Ending unrest in the Niger Delta*, ICG Africa Report No.135, 5 December, pp.2-3 – Attachment 2).

On 6 November 2007 *This Day*, a Nigerian news source reported that NDPVF leader Asari Dokubo criticised President Umaru Yar'Adua and warned that a suspension of armed struggle by the group was only temporary and could be broken if provoked. Asari also reportedly described MEND as a "decoy" created when he was imprisoned by militants to protect themselves. *This Day* report that:

"On MEND, Dokubo said that the organisation was a decoy put up by Niger Delta militants to protect themselves, stressing that there was no such organization in real life. According to him, "I want to say that there is no organization known as MEND. (There is) no organization known as MEND. Let any officer of MEND stand up. When I was arrested and I got into prison, when they took me into detention, Federated Niger Delta Ijaw Communities (FNDIC) and Niger Delta Peoples Volunteers Force and other organizations met at Okerenkenko.

"I was in prison and they said we cannot go with any other name or other leaders will be arrested and they decided that we should get another organization.' He warned that the suspension of armed struggle by his militant group was only temporary. He stated that the suspension could be lifted in response to the continued provocation of the people of the region by both internal and external forces. Dokubo said that he and other militant groups in the Niger Delta were using the peace conference as a platform to articulate the pains of the people of the region with the hope that the Federal Government would be able to better appreciate them (pains).

He said his decision to hand out the olive branch was informed by the concern for the people of the region whose situation, according to him, he did not want to worsen (Ojeifo, S 2007, 'Asari Dokubo Slams Yar'Adua Over Obasanjo', *This Day*, 6 November, allAfrica.com website <http://allafrica.com/> – Accessed 30 January 2008 – Attachment 3).

**MEND**

Reports indicate that following the arrest of NDPVF leader Mujahid Dokubo-Asari in September 2005 the NDPVF fractured and some former members created the Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND). MEND first came to public attention in January 2006 and have targeted international oil companies operating in the Niger Delta. MEND has kidnapped oil company employees and bombed oil company infrastructure and military cars. MEND are a loosely organised secretive group who demand increased local control of oil resources and the eventual expulsion of international oil companies from the Niger Delta. However, a November 2007 report by *Stratfor* states that MEND is becoming fragmented, decentralised and increasingly motivated by “power and greed” as opposed to its original political goals. Sources report that while MEND agreed to a cease fire and to co-operate with President Yar’Adua this ended with the arrest of Henry Okah, a MEND leader in September 2007. Reports indicate that the arrest of Okah has resulted in renewed threats and attacks by MEND (Marquardt, E. 2007, ‘Mujahid Dokubo-Asari: The Niger Delta’s Ijaw Leader’, *Terrorism Monitor*, Jamestown Foundation website, vol. 5, no. 15, 2 August <http://www.jamestown.org/terrorism/news/article.php?articleid=2373587> – Accessed 11 January 2008 – Attachment 1; Hanson, S. 2007 “MEND: The Niger Delta’s Umbrella Militant Group”, Council on Foreign Relations, 22 March <http://www.cfr.org/publication/12920/> – Accessed 9 January 2008 – Attachment 4; ‘Nigeria: The Splintering of MEND’ 2007, *Stratfor*, 16 November <http://www.stratfor.com> – Accessed 24 January 2008 – Attachment 5; Eluemunor, T. 2007 ‘Africa Insight – Country Faces a Tunnel At the End of the Light’ *This Nation (Nairobi)*, 21 December, allAfrica.com website <http://allafrica.com/> – Accessed 31 January 2008 – Attachment 6).

## Origins

Sources indicate that the fracturing of the NDPVF in late 2005 led to the formation of MEND by some former NDPVF members. An August 2007 report by the *Terrorism Monitor* journal describes the disintegration of the NDPVF after the arrest of Asari and the subsequent fighting of some former NDPVF members under the name of MEND:

On September 20, 2005, Nigerian authorities arrested Asari on charges of treason and imprisoned him at the federal security services headquarters in Abuja.

...Furthermore, in the wake of his detention, violence in the delta actually escalated. It appears that the NDPVF fractured, and former fighters conducted attacks in the name of the Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND) and other armed groups (Marquardt, E. 2007, ‘Mujahid Dokubo-Asari: The Niger Delta’s Ijaw Leader’, *Terrorism Monitor*, Jamestown Foundation website, vol. 5, no. 15, 2 August <http://www.jamestown.org/terrorism/news/article.php?articleid=2373587> – Accessed 11 January 2008 – Attachment 1).

A May 2007 report from *Guardian Unlimited* states that MEND originated as a result of Asari’s declaration of war against the Nigerian government and his subsequent arrest. The following is an extract from the report:

Mend was born out of an incident in 2004 when a delta strongman, Mujahid Dokubo-Asari, declared “all-out war” on the Nigerian government over its neglect and abuse of his region. A year later, he was arrested and accused of treason. Not long afterwards, Mend made its appearance with an attack on a Shell facility by well-armed rebels in three speedboats, forcing the Nigerian navy to retreat and abducting four oil workers from a Shell boat. In a parallel attack, Mend blew up a Shell pipeline. Four days later, it hit a Shell pumping station, killing 14 soldiers and two of the company’s caterers. Shell swiftly shut down one oilfield nine miles

offshore, one of its largest, fearing that it was no longer safe to move by boat (McGreal, C. 2007 'Delta Force', *Guardian Unlimited*, 10 May [http://www.guardian.co.uk/insideafrica/story/0,,2210222,00.html#article\\_continue](http://www.guardian.co.uk/insideafrica/story/0,,2210222,00.html#article_continue) – Accessed 15 January 2008 – Attachment 7).

*Vanity Fair* reported on the formation of MEND in a February 2007 article titled “Blood Oil”. The article by Sebastian Junger also links the formation of MEND with the outlawing of the NDPVF and the arrest of Asari. *Vanity Fair* report that:

The formation of MEND seems to have been triggered by Asari’s arrest in September 2005. Asari had threatened to “dismember” Nigeria, which smelled enough like treason for the Obasanjo government to finally go after him. The first MEND attack came four months later and was soon followed by e-mails from Jomo demanding the release of both Asari and Diepreye Alamieyeseigha, the Bayelsa state governor charged with corruption. (Alamieyeseigha is Ijaw and was closely connected to Asari.) The first four oil workers kidnapped by MEND were lectured for 19 days on the poverty and environmental degradation of the delta. More than ransom money, the militants said they wanted all foreigners to leave their territory. In other words, they wanted control of their oil (Junger, S. 2007, ‘Blood Oil’, *Vanity Fair*, February <http://www.vanityfair.com/politics/features/2007/02/junger200702?printable=true&currentPage=all> – Accessed 10 January 2008 – Attachment 8).

## Aims

Information indicates that MEND’s general aim is greater local control over oil resources in the Niger Delta. Sources report that MEND advocates for increased local control of oil revenue and has demanded the release of imprisoned movement leaders and the withdrawal of government troops from the Niger Delta. MEND has also been described as an ethnic Ijaw group which promotes the rights and interests of the Ijaws, an indigenous group in the Delta area. Sources report that the long term objective of MEND is the expulsion of international oil companies from the Niger Delta region. However, a November 2007 article by *Stratfor*, reports that as MEND is becoming increasingly fractured and less coordinated, it is also becoming less concerned with its original aim of ending the exploitation of the Niger Delta by international oil companies and is instead increasingly motivated by “power and greed” (‘Group Profile: Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND)’ 2007, MIPT Terrorism website, 20 November <http://www.tkb.org/group.jsp?groupid=4692> – Accessed 11 January 2008 – Attachment 9; Hanson, S. 2007 “MEND: The Niger Delta’s Umbrella Militant Group”, Council on Foreign Relations, 22 March <http://www.cfr.org/publication/12920/> – Accessed 9 January 2008 – Attachment 4; ‘Nigeria: The Splintering of MEND’ 2007, *Stratfor*, 16 November <http://www.stratfor.com> – Accessed 24 January 2008 – Attachment 5).

A March 2007 report by the Council on Foreign Relations reports that MEND’s broad long term objective is ‘resource control’. According to the report MEND have also made various political demands including political representation and political autonomy for Niger Delta residents. The Council on Foreign Relations provides the following description of the context in which MEND originated and its philosophies and aims:

MEND is the most recent, and most renowned, of the large number of militant groups in the Niger Delta, an oil-rich region of mangrove swamps and creeks in the country’s south and one of the world’s largest wetlands. **The militants, like the Niger Delta’s population at large, object to the environmental degradation and underdevelopment of the region and the lack of benefits the community has received from its extensive oil resources.** While

there is a revenue-sharing plan in which the federal government distributes roughly half of the country's oil revenues among state governors, these funds do not trickle down to the roughly 30 million residents of the Delta. In 2003, some 70 percent of oil revenues was stolen or wasted, according to an estimate by the head of Nigeria's anticorruption agency. Whereas many residents used to work as fishermen, oil installations and spills have decimated the fish population and now markets must import frozen fish, according to National Geographic “

**...Since its inception, MEND has articulated three major demands: the release of Asari from prison, the receipt of 50 percent of revenues from oil pumped out of the Delta, and the withdrawal of government troops from the Delta. Its broader aim is “resource control,” but it has largely failed to delineate specific long-term goals.**

...Experts disagree over the trajectory of MEND's politics. Some Nigeria experts say the group's demands have progressed to an interest in taking part in the political process. Obasi says the group issued a statement asking for a certain number of seats in the Niger Delta legislature and in the National Assembly, which shows they see themselves “perhaps even as a legitimate political party.” Others say MEND wants political autonomy for residents of the Niger Delta. Divisions within the core leadership may be perpetuating these conflicting messages: Owen says there are elements in MEND's core leadership who want local government representation but others who are firmly opposed to being involved with the state (Hanson, S. 2007 “MEND: The Niger Delta's Umbrella Militant Group”, Council on Foreign Relations, 22 March <http://www.cfr.org/publication/12920/> – Accessed 9 January 2008 – Attachment 4).

A November 2007 group profile by MIPT Terrorism Knowledge Base describes the goals of MEND. According to the MIPT, MEND advocates for the rights of the Ijaw tribe in the Niger Delta, seeks greater local control of oil revenues and demands improved basic services for the Niger Delta population. The ‘ultimate’ goal of MEND is reported to be the eradication of foreign oil companies from the Niger Delta. The MIPT report that:

The Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND) is an active terrorist group that uses violent means to support the rights of the ethnic Ijaw people in the Niger Delta. In contrast to the healthy profit margins enjoyed by foreign oil companies operating in Nigeria, most Nigerians in the Delta region live in poverty, and many feel that they are being neglected by the government. These conditions have led to the proliferation of local terrorist groups, which at last count, numbered around 120.

...Led by a notoriously shadowy and secretive elite cadre, MEND's ultimate goal is to expel foreign oil companies and Nigerians not indigenous to the Delta region from Ijaw land. In the short run, the group wishes to increase local control over money made from the exploitation of the region's abundant natural resources. For instance, the organization recently pressured the government to demand the payment of \$1.5 billion from Shell Oil for damage done to the local environment. MEND also wants the central government to provide basic services such as running water to the region and increase government investment in the area's infrastructure. Finally, MEND wishes to secure the release of imprisoned Ijaw advocates Alhaji Dokubo-Asari, a leader of NDPVF, and Diepreye Alamieyeseigha, the former governor of Bayelsa State (‘Group Profile: Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND)’ 2007, MIPT Terrorism website, 20 November <http://www.tkb.org/group.jsp?groupid=4692> – Accessed 11 January 2008 – Attachment 9).

A report by *Guardian Unlimited*, dated 10 May 2007 emphasizes the ethnic politics of MEND. The report describes MEND as “mostly an Ijaw movement” which defends and advocates the interests of the Ijaw people who, MEND argue, have not received an equitable

portion of oil profits compared to tribes in the North of Nigeria. *Guardian Unlimited* provides the following analysis of the ethnically focused goals of MEND:

Mend is mostly an Ijaw movement, and ethnic rivalry underpins its struggle. The Ijaws are the largest ethnic group in the delta and the fourth largest in Nigeria. But they claim that Yorubas and Hausas, the two largest groups, who have dominated the political and military leadership of the country, have directed a disproportionate share of the resources to developing their regions.

“The Niger delta state is the source of the wealth of the nation,” says the accountant at General I Am’s side. “Without oil there is nothing to finance the budget. Why should they use oil to develop other places and not us? In the north, all the villages have electricity and water. Abuja [Nigeria’s capital] has been transformed into a mini-London and we are abandoned.”

...The voice of Mend – and possibly its leader – is a mysterious being who goes by the name of Jomo Gbomo. He is contactable only by email, and acknowledges that Gbomo is not his real name. It is not even certain that Gbomo is one person, but the Mend fighters under General I Am acknowledge him as their leader.

“Our aim is to force the oil companies out of the Niger delta [or] otherwise compel the Nigerian government to cede its control over the resources of the Niger delta to its indigenes,” said Gbomo in reply to emailed questions from the Guardian. “We intend to achieve this solely through armed struggle and perhaps, at some stage, negotiations based upon the rights of the people of the Niger delta as agreed in the pre-independence constitution (McGreal, C. 2007 ‘Delta Force’, *Guardian Unlimited*, 10 May [http://www.guardian.co.uk/insideafrica/story/0,,2210222,00.html#article\\_continue](http://www.guardian.co.uk/insideafrica/story/0,,2210222,00.html#article_continue) – Accessed 15 January 2008 – Attachment 7).

In contrast to these reports, a November 2007 article by *Stratfor* describes MEND as increasingly moving away from its original political aims. *Stratfor* reports that as MEND is becoming increasingly fragmented and decentralised it is losing its political focus and is instead becoming motivated by “power and greed”. *Stratfor* provide the following analysis of MEND:

A dynamite explosion damaged an oil pipeline Nov. 15 at Royal Dutch/Shell’s Forcados terminal in Nigeria’s Delta state. The bombing occurred just three days after a group of 60 gunmen aboard eight boats attacked the ExxonMobil-operated Qua Iboe terminal in the Niger Delta state of Akwa Iboe.

Attacks against oil interests in the Niger Delta often are attributed to the militant group Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND). However, it is more likely that the latest two incidents were carried out by groups that continue to operate under the MEND banner but no longer feel compelled to report to a central leadership.

...MEND no longer is the coordinated organization it once was, as evidenced by its degraded ability to conduct large-scale attacks. Rather, it has become a loose cooperation of criminal gangs and cult groups that seek control of trade routes and certain communities in the Niger Delta. Moreover, MEND as a group seems to care less and less about its original political objective -- ridding the delta region of the foreign oil companies that the group says are exploiting the area’s people and natural resources -- and is now clearly motivated purely by power and greed. Foreign oil companies in these communities regularly are coerced into paying protection money.

...Despite MEND claims that its actions are aimed at redressing socioeconomic injustices, it remains clear that the group's motives are dictated by power and greed ('Nigeria: The Splintering of MEND' 2007, *Stratfor*, 16 November <http://www.stratfor.com> – Accessed 24 January 2008 – Attachment 5).

## Structure and Leadership

Limited information was found in the sources consulted regarding the exact structure and leadership of MEND. This is consistent with the reported secrecy of the organisation. The Council of Foreign Relations describes MEND as a de-centralised organisation with fluid membership. A November 2007 report by *Stratfor* states that “MEND no longer is the coordinated organisation it once was” and instead describes MEND as “a loose cooperation of criminal gangs and cult groups that seek control of trade routes and certain communities in the Niger Delta”. Some individuals have been reported to be leaders within MEND. Sources indicate that Jomo Gbomo is the official spokesperson for MEND. Sources also report other individuals who claim leadership positions in MEND including General Godswill Tamuno, Brutus Ebipadei and Henry Okah. The ICG has reported that the arrest of Henry Okah in September 2007 has led to an expansion of militant activity by the group (Hanson, S. 2007 “MEND: The Niger Delta's Umbrella Militant Group”, Council on Foreign Relations, 22 March <http://www.cfr.org/publication/12920/> – Accessed 9 January 2008 – Attachment 4; ‘Nigeria: The Splintering of MEND’ 2007, *Stratfor*, 16 November <http://www.stratfor.com> – Accessed 24 January 2008 – Attachment 5; Murray, S. 2007, ‘The shadowy militants in Nigeria's Delta’, *BBC News*, 10 May <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/africa/6644097.stm> – Accessed 10 January 2008 – Attachment 10).

A March 2007 report on The Council on Foreign Relations website describes the de-centralised and flexible organisation of MEND:

Many elements of MEND remain secretive. Estimates of its size range from the low hundreds to the low thousands. Like other Delta militant groups, MEND is largely made up of young Igaw men in their twenties. Yet Nnamdi K. Obasi, West Africa senior analyst at the International Crisis Group, says “MEND seems to be led by more enlightened and sophisticated men than most of the groups in the past.” Its leaders are educated, some at the university level, and they have learned from militant movements in other parts of the world, he says.

Experts agree that MEND does not have a united structure, and Okonta argues the group is an “idea” more than an organization. Olly Owen, research associate at the Center for Democracy and Development in Nigeria, compares the group to a franchise operation. “Nigeria is a fluid and difficult place to operate, so you need to choose the organizational structure that allows you to operate best.” This structure allows MEND more flexibility, he says, but has also created confusion over the group's composition. An International Crisis Group (ICG) report describes a similar structure in which militant groups switch affiliations on a case-by-case basis. “Some of these elements alternate between identifying themselves as MEND and operating under other names,” the report claims. Such groups include the NDPVF, the Coalition for Militant Action in the Niger Delta (COMA), and the Martyr's Brigade (Hanson, S. 2007 “MEND: The Niger Delta's Umbrella Militant Group”, Council on Foreign Relations, 22 March <http://www.cfr.org/publication/12920/> – Accessed 9 January 2008 – Attachment 4).

A November 2007 report by *Stratfor* describes MEND as lacking coherent structure and centralised leadership and being loosely composed of “criminal gangs and cult groups”. *Stratfor* offer the following assessment of MEND’s structure:

Attacks against oil interests in the Niger Delta often are attributed to the militant group Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND). However, it is more likely that the latest two incidents were carried out by groups that continue to operate under the MEND banner but no longer feel compelled to report to a central leadership.

...MEND no longer is the coordinated organization it once was, as evidenced by its degraded ability to conduct large-scale attacks. Rather, it has become a loose cooperation of criminal gangs and cult groups that seek control of trade routes and certain communities in the Niger Delta. Moreover, MEND as a group seems to care less and less about its original political objective -- ridding the delta region of the foreign oil companies that the group says are exploiting the area’s people and natural resources -- and is now clearly motivated purely by power and greed. Foreign oil companies in these communities regularly are coerced into paying protection money.

One explanation for some of the recent attacks is a power struggle among various MEND factions. The undisputed arms smuggler for MEND, Henry Okah, aka Gbomo Jomo, was arrested in the Angolan capital Sept. 22, forcing MEND’s factions to refigure their arms supply. Meanwhile, MEND leader Mujahid Dokubo-Asari has begun aligning with the Nigerian government, acting as its liaison with militant groups. With Okah incapacitated and Asari in the government’s pocket, faction leaders such as Tompolo and Farah could be attempting to fill the leadership voids (‘Nigeria: The Splintering of MEND’ 2007, *Stratfor*, 16 November <http://www.stratfor.com> – Accessed 24 January 2008 – Attachment 5).

The report by The Council on Foreign Relations also describes the anonymity of MEND’s leadership. According to the report Jomo Gbomo has claimed to be the spokesperson for MEND. The report also mentions Brutus Ebipadei and Major-General Godswill Tamuno as individuals who have claimed leadership roles in MEND. The report states that:

The leadership of MEND is similarly unclear. Most foreign journalists communicate with Jomo Gbomo, who claims to be a spokesman for MEND. Men called Brutus Ebipadei and Major-General Godswill Tamuno have communicated with the press and claimed leadership roles in the group. Oxford’s Okonta says he has spoken to members of the core leadership of MEND, who explained to him they remain undercover to protect themselves. “They have to work in such a way that the government does not get into their working structure,” Okonta says. Owen says the leadership of MEND maintains anonymity due to Asari’s arrest, but they are likely “recycled from other organizations” such as Asari’s group and the Ijaw Youth Congress.

MEND is able to maintain its secrecy because of sympathy for the group among locals. Government crackdowns have only bolstered that sympathy and driven recruits (Hanson, S. 2007 “MEND: The Niger Delta’s Umbrella Militant Group”, Council on Foreign Relations, 22 March <http://www.cfr.org/publication/12920/> – Accessed 9 January 2008 – Attachment 4).

A 10 May 2007 report by *BBC News* describes Jomo Gbomo as the “founding leader of the militant group” and “Bayelsa State faction leader”. The report also describes General Godswill Tamuno as claiming MEND leadership. *BBC News* provide the following report:

While Jomo Gbomo, founding leader of the militant group remains in charge of his group in the Bayelsa State and Rivers State creeks, a person calling himself Gen Godswill Tamuno has emerged claiming to be the leader of another Mend group in Delta State.

### **‘Overall leader’**

“How can I be called a factional leader and compared to political thugs in Delta State who dare not sit in my presence?” Mr Gbomo queried in an angry email to the BBC.

“I am the overall leader of all militant groups in the Niger Delta. That has never been in dispute” (Murray, S. 2007, ‘The shadowy militants in Nigeria’s Delta’, *BBC News*, 10 May <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/africa/6644097.stm> – Accessed 10 January 2008 – Attachment 10).

A February 2007 article by *Vanity Fair* describes Jomo Gbomo as the spokesperson of the MEND. The article also states that when the journalists met with a MEND group they learned that the leadership of the group changed regularly based on a spiritual belief:

The official MEND spokesman is a mysterious online entity known as Jomo Gbomo, who trades sharply articulate e-mails with foreign journalists who arrive in the delta to cover the oil wars. No one seems to know Jomo’s real name or even where he lives; according to *The Wall Street Journal*, his Yahoo account carries an electronic code that may indicate his e-mails are sent from a computer in South Africa. Jomo is the person whom visiting journalists turn to for permission to go into the creeks, and he has refused every single request.

...The first sign of trouble was when one of the village boys got in our boat and drove it away into the creeks so that we couldn’t leave. Another hour went by, and dusk started to creep in through the mangrove. Finally we heard the sound of a powerful outboard motor, and then a boatload of gunmen roared past the village, plowed a couple of angry circles into the narrow creek, and came into the landing at what looked like full throttle. The women in the village fled. MEND had arrived.

... Their leader was a slender boy wrapped in a red turban and white robe who was helped out of the boat almost like a child. Leaders are often chosen by the Ijaw god of war, Egbesu, and leadership can change daily. Egbesu sometimes communicates his desires by appearing in the dreams or visions of one of his followers and instructing him to be leader for that day. If the man tells the truth about Egbesu, others follow him without question; if he lies about it, Egbesu might kill him (Junger, S 2007, ‘Blood Oil’, *Vanity Fair*, February <http://www.vanityfair.com/politics/features/2007/02/junger200702?printable=true&currentPage=all> – Accessed 10 January 2008 – Attachment 8).

A December 2007 paper by the ICG on the Niger Delta also lists “Henry Okah” as a “MEND factional leader. The ICG report states:

Henry Okah, a MEND factional leader, has been a key figure in supplying arms to Delta militants. Partly based in South Africa, he was also MEND’s “emailer”, responsible for informing the mass media of positions and operations (International Crisis Group 2007, *Nigeria: Ending unrest in the Niger Delta*, ICG Africa Report No.135, 5 December – Attachment 2).

### **Activities**

MEND is a militant group which targets international oil companies in the Niger Delta. Sources indicate that MEND’s main tactic is the kidnapping of foreign oil company employees in order to negotiate with oil companies and the government and to gain international media attention for their cause. MEND has been active in the bombing of oil company infrastructure and has undertaken some military car bombings. A December 2007 report by the ICG states that MEND has recently renewed attacks on oil companies due to the arrest in September 2007 of Henry Okah, a MEND leader. The ICG report that MEND has

threatened to attack other parts of Nigeria, outside the Niger Delta including major bridges and other non-oil sector infrastructure (Murray, S. 2007, 'The shadowy militants in Nigeria's Delta', *BBC News*, 10 May <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/africa/6644097.stm> – Accessed 10 January 2008 – Attachment 10; 'Group Profile: Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND)' 2007, MIPT Terrorism website, 20 November <http://www.tkb.org/group.jsp?groupid=4692> – Accessed 11 January 2008 – Attachment 4; International Crisis Group 2007, *Nigeria: Ending unrest in the Niger Delta*, ICG Africa Report No.135, 5 December, p.7 – Attachment 2).

A May 2007 report by *BBC News* states that MEND's main tactic is the kidnapping of foreign oil workers who are generally released unhurt following negotiations. *BBC News* report that:

From a poorly organised gang fighting with little more than sticks and machetes, Mend has grown to become a disciplined military machine, using speedboats, machine guns and rocket-propelled grenades to carry out precise attacks on oil targets.

Mend's attacks have been the main cause of an 800,000 bpd (25%) reduction in Nigeria's oil production output, according to Finance Minister Nenadi Usman.

...Although the group regularly attacks oil installations, their predominant tactic remains the kidnapping of foreign workers whom they usually release unharmed after they feel they have made their point, says the BBC's Abdullahi Kaura (Murray, S. 2007, 'The shadowy militants in Nigeria's Delta', *BBC News*, 10 May <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/africa/6644097.stm> – Accessed 10 January 2008 – Attachment 10).

A March 2007 report by the Council on Foreign Relations also reports that the primary method of MEND is the kidnapping of foreign oil workers. The report states that MEND uses hostages to make demands of oil companies and the Nigerian government and to draw international media attention to the issues of the Niger Delta. The Council on Foreign Relations report that after negotiations hostages are generally released unharmed. The following is an extract of the report:

MEND's attacks have hurt Nigeria's oil exports—costing at least eight hundred thousand barrels per day, or over 25 percent of the country's oil output, according to Nigerian officials. A February 2006 attack on two Royal Dutch Shell oilfields accounted for some 477,000 barrels per day of the reduced output; analysts believe the fields may reopen after April's election. Though the group regularly carries out attacks against pipelines and is responsible for at least two car bombings, its primary tactic is kidnapping foreign oil workers. It typically releases these hostages unharmed after a period of negotiations—via intermediaries—with oil company representatives and the government. Okonta writes that taking hostages allows MEND to focus international attention on the Niger Delta and “to exploit the blaze of publicity thus generated to announce their grievances and demands of the Nigerian government.”

Hostage negotiations can involve ransom money, though MEND denies this. ICG's Obasi says MEND tries to distance itself from the criminal activities the smaller militant groups are notorious for, but some of those organizations linked to MEND may ask for ransom money on its behalf (Hanson, S. 2007 “MEND: The Niger Delta's Umbrella Militant Group”, Council on Foreign Relations, 22 March <http://www.cfr.org/publication/12920/> – Accessed 9 January 2008 – Attachment 4).

A 2007 report by the MIPT Terrorism Knowledge Base provides an overview of the militant tactics of MEND which includes kidnappings and bombings. MIPT report that while MEND usually targets key oil company infrastructure it has also undertaken a car bomb attack on a military barracks. MIPT states that:

MEND's tactics have evolved from crude kidnapping-for-ransom operations into more sophisticated and effective methods that combine actions such as hostage-taking and bombings with the effective use of local and increasingly international media propaganda campaigns. MEND bombings usually target key points in oil pipelines and facilities in the Delta to maximize disruption and cost to foreign oil companies. A recent car bomb attack on an urban military barracks in Port Harcourt, the regional capital, is an example of the growing diversity of MEND's methods and targets and reflects growing frustration with what the Ijaw perceive to be government indifference to their plight ('Group Profile: Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND)' 2007, MIPT Terrorism website, 20 November <http://www.tkb.org/group.jsp?groupid=4692> – Accessed 11 January 2008 – Attachment 9).

The MIPT also provide the following table of statistics in relation to the activities of MEND which indicates that attacks are overwhelmingly carried out against businesses:

| 1968 – Present  |          |            |
|-----------------|----------|------------|
| Incidents       | Injuries | Fatalities |
| 7               | 10       | 4          |
| <b>Targets:</b> |          |            |
| Government      |          | 14%        |
| Utilities       |          | 14%        |
| Business        |          | 71%        |

('Group Profile: Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND)' 2007, MIPT Terrorism website, 20 November <http://www.tkb.org/group.jsp?groupid=4692> – Accessed 11 January 2008 – Attachment 9).

A December 2007 report by the ICG provides an overview on the current political situation in the Niger Delta and the position of MEND. The ICG states that the new Nigerian president Umaru Yar'Adua's, inaugurated on 29 May 2007, has advocated for increased negotiations with Niger Delta militants. However, the ICG report that government "inertia in translating intent into action" and the arrest in September 2007 of a MEND leader, Henry Okah, in Angola has provoked renewed attacks on oil company infrastructure and workers by MEND (p.1). The ICG report that since October 2007 MEND has increased its attacks on oil companies and has made threats to extend its attacks beyond the Niger Delta region. The ICG provide the following description of recent activity by MEND:

Instead of reducing militant activity immediately after the elections, MEND opted for a defiant show of strength. Militants attacked pipelines supplying the Brass terminal, temporarily reducing Nigerian Agip Oil Company (NAOC, a subsidiary of Eni of Italy)

production by over 75 per cent. Once satisfied it had made its point and in deference to moderates who wished to test the new government's promise to address Delta grievances, MEND released many of its hostages and declared a one-month ceasefire. After its expiration on 3 July 2007, it threatened to renew attacks, arguing in response to Okah's September arrest that "you [the Nigerian government] cannot frame someone who is an integral part of a peace process, isolate him and then not expect trouble".

MEND has stepped up its attacks on major oil facilities since October 2007. On 12 November, it attacked the Qua Iboe terminal in Akwa Ibom State, saying the purpose was to seize guns, ammunition and outboard engines in preparation for imminent combat against Nigerian troops. Two days later, it claimed responsibility for an attack on a crude oil pipeline feeding the Forcados export terminal in Delta State, spilling a large volume of oil and forcing the Shell Petroleum Development Company (SPDC) to reduce daily output by 20,000 to 50,000 barrels.

The movement has threatened that "in due time" its campaigns would "strategically focus on Angolan concerns in Nigeria", in reprisal for Okah's detention. It has also repeated a threat first made in late October to bomb major bridges and other non-oil sector infrastructure outside the Delta. If it succeeds in striking at Angola's embassy or other interests in Nigeria, it could produce serious difficulties for bilateral relations. If it carries out its threat to hit targets beyond the Delta, and particularly if such attacks cause significant casualties, it could open new and dangerous tensions between the Ijaw and affected ethnic groups (International Crisis Group 2007, *Nigeria: Ending unrest in the Niger Delta*, ICG Africa Report No.135, 5 December, p.7 – Attachment 2).

A report dated 11 January 2008 by *This Day*, a Nigerian paper states that MEND claimed responsibility for an attack on four oil company sea vessels in which two people were injured. The report states that MEND has threatened to continue attacks on military checkpoints and the oil industry. *This Day* reports that:

Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta(MEND),yesterday took responsibility for the attack at Buoy 61 on the Bonny channel, where four vessels came under attack, with two people sustaining injuries, one on the belly and the other on his genitals.

...They said they will further support more small groups in the region to carry out similar attacks on such vessels in the near future, as a means of sabotaging oil related businesses, which they have vowed to cripple within the Niger Delta region.

MEND in its statement, claimed the attacks were real and was in line with its earlier statement that they were going to hit more locations across the Niger Delta region, especially military checkpoints and locations.

"Freelance freedom fighters, sponsored by the Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND), carried out harassment on the four vessels belonging to some oil companies in the Bonny River on Tuesday, January 8, 2008. MEND will be supporting these small independent groups to harass and sabotage the oil industry at will.," the statement said (Ogbu, A. 2008 'Mend Claims Responsibility for Bonny Attack' *This Day (Lagos)*, 11 January, allAfrica.com website <http://allafrica.com/> – Accessed 17 January 2008 – Attachment 11).

## **2. Could either organisation be regarded as a "Peaceful and non-violent organisation"?**

No reports were found in the sources consulted which describe the NDPVF or MEND as peaceful or non-violent organisations. Reports indicate that MEND and the NDPVF have both used militant and violent tactics to promote their political aims.

## **MEND**

Reports state that MEND's major activity is the kidnapping of oil workers as hostages but that these hostages are generally released unharmed after a period of negotiation. MEND has also engaged in the bombing of oil infrastructure and military cars. Sources indicate that following the arrest of MEND leader, Henry Okah in September 2007 MEND has threatened to extend its campaign beyond the Niger Delta region and bomb major bridges and non-oil sector infrastructure (Hanson, S. 2007 "MEND: The Niger Delta's Umbrella Militant Group", Council on Foreign Relations, 22 March <http://www.cfr.org/publication/12920/> – Accessed 9 January 2008 – Attachment 4; International Crisis Group 2007, *Nigeria: Ending unrest in the Niger Delta*, ICG Africa Report No.135, 5 December, p.7 – Attachment 2).

Please refer to question one of this research response for detailed information on MEND's militant activities.

## **NDPVF**

Reports indicate that prior to the arrest of NDPVF leader, Mujahid Dokubo-Asari in September 2005, the NDPVF attacked oil company infrastructure, fought with rival gangs and declared an "all out war on the Nigerian State". In September 2004 the NDPVF demanded that international oil companies operating in the Niger Delta shut down or their employees would be subject to a major guerilla operation. Human Rights Watch reported in February 2005 that the NDPVF was also involved in ongoing violent warfare with a rival militant gang for control of oil resources. This reportedly led to the death of "hundreds" of fighters as well as "serious human rights abuses against ordinary Nigerians". Since his release in June 2007 Asari has negotiated with government officials and has called upon Niger Delta militants to stop kidnapping hostages and other violent activity. However, according to a 6 November 2007 report by *This Day*, a Nigerian news source Asari warned the government that a suspension of the militant armed struggle by the NDPVF was only temporary and could be revoked (Marquardt, E. 2007, 'Mujahid Dokubo-Asari: The Niger Delta's Ijaw Leader', *Terrorism Monitor*, Jamestown Foundation website, vol. 5, no. 15, 2 August <http://www.jamestown.org/terrorism/news/article.php?articleid=2373587> – Accessed 11 January 2008 – Attachment 1; Human Rights Watch 2004, "Political Shari'a"? Human Rights and Islamic Law in Northern Nigeria, September, vol. 16, no. 9(A), pp.22-23; Human Rights Watch 2005, "Rivers and Blood: Guns, Oil and Power in Nigeria's Rivers State", February, p.2 <http://hrw.org/backgrounder/africa/nigeria0205/nigeria0205.pdf> - Accessed 29 January 2008 - Attachment 12; International Crisis Group 2007, *Nigeria: Ending unrest in the Niger Delta*, ICG Africa Report No.135, 5 December, pp.2-3 – Attachment 2; Ojeifo, S 2007, 'Asari Dokubo Slams Yar'Adua Over Obasanjo', *This Day*, 6 November, allAfrica.com website <http://allafrica.com/> – Accessed 30 January 2008 -Attachment 3).

## **List of Sources Consulted**

### Internet Sources:

## **Government Information & Reports**

Immigration & Refugee Board of Canada <http://www.irb.gc.ca/>

UK Home Office <http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk>

US Department of State <http://www.state.gov/>

US Department of State website <http://www.state.gov>

## **United Nations (UN)**

UNHCR <http://www.unhcr.ch/>

## **Non-Government Organisations**

Amnesty International website <http://www.amnesty.org/>

Freedom House <http://www.freedomhouse.org/template.cfm?page=1>

Human Rights Watch <http://www.hrw.org/>

International Helsinki Federation for Human Rights <http://www.ihf-hr.org/welcome.php>

Human Rights Internet (HRI) website <http://www.hri.ca>

## **International News & Politics**

*BBC News* website <http://news.bbc.co.uk/>

Council on Foreign Relations <http://www.cfr.org/index.html>

International Crisis Group <http://www.crisisgroup.org/home/index.cfm?l=1>

Jamestown Foundation <http://www.jamestown.org/terrorism/index.php>

MIPT Terrorism website <http://www.tkb.org/Home.jsp>

Vanity Fair <http://www.vanityfair.com/>

## **Search Engines**

Google search engine <http://www.google.com.au/>

## **Online Subscription Services**

All Africa website <http://allafrica.com/>

Stratfor <http://www.stratfor.com>

## **Databases:**

FACTIVA (news database)

BACIS (DIMA Country Information database)

REFINFO (IRBDC (Canada) Country Information database)

ISYS (RRT Country Research database, including Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch, US Department of State Reports)

RRT Library Catalogue

## **List of Attachments**

1. Marquardt, E. 2007, 'Mujahid Dokubo-Asari: The Niger Delta's Ijaw Leader', *Terrorism Monitor*, Jamestown Foundation website, vol. 5, no. 15, 2 August <http://www.jamestown.org/terrorism/news/article.php?articleid=2373587> – Accessed 11 January 2008.
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9. ‘Group Profile: Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND)’ 2007, MIPT Terrorism website, 20 November <http://www.tkb.org/group.jsp?groupid=4692> – Accessed 11 January 2008.
10. Murray, S. 2007, ‘The shadowy militants in Nigeria’s Delta’, *BBC News*, 10 May <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/africa/6644097.stm> – Accessed 10 January 2008.
11. Ogbu, A. 2008 ‘Mend Claims Responsibility for Bonny Attack’ *This Day (Lagos)*, 11 January, allAfrica.com website <http://allafrica.com/> – Accessed 17 January 2008.
12. Human Rights Watch 2005, “Rivers and Blood: Guns, Oil and Power in Nigeria’s Rivers State”, February <http://hrw.org/backgrounders/africa/nigeria0205/nigeria0205.pdf> - Accessed 29 January 2008.