



COI QUERY

Country of Origin	Nigeria
Question(s)	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Security situation in Kokori village (Delta State)2. General information on the Liberation Movement of the Urhobo People (LIMUP), around June 2014, in Delta State, and more specifically in the village of Kokori
Date of completion	7 May 2018
Query Code	Q74
Contributing EU+ COI units (if applicable)	

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The target audience is caseworkers, COI researchers, policy makers, and decision making authorities. The answer was finalised on 7 May 2018. Any event taking place after this date is not included in this answer.



COI QUERY RESPONSE

1. Security situation in Kokori village (Delta State)

Kokori is described by the Nigerian newspaper 'Vanguard' as 'one of the six sub-urban 'states' of Agbon kingdom in Ethiope East Local Government Area of Delta State with a population of between 50,000 and 100,000 persons, occupying about 196 square kilometres.'¹

An article by the Vanguard mentions that Kelvin Ibruvwe Oniarah (hereinafter referred to as Kelvin), leader of the Liberation Movement of the Urhobo People (LIMUP), was arrested in Port Harcourt by army and Department of State Services (DSS) operatives, on **25 September 2013**². Earlier articles by the Vanguard mention that Kelvin had 'issued a 60-day ultimatum to Delta State and Federal Governments to address unemployment and poverty in the Urhobo Nation and Kokori in particular', otherwise LIMUP would blow up oil installations in the area. Additionally, he urged the government to grant amnesty to LIMUP members³. Another article mentions that, following this ultimatum, security chiefs in Kokori area were 'working out fresh measures' to protect the oil installations⁴.

A day after Kelvin's arrest, on **26 September 2013**, a Vanguard article reports that 'soldiers [of the Joint Task Force (JTF)], who we later learnt, had been in the community since Monday on "internal operation", laid siege to the community when we visited' and that 'some of the villagers began to flee the town, same day, suspecting that something ominous could happen with the heavy presence of soldiers in Kokori'. According to the same article, soldiers, who were later joined by police forces, conducted searches and arrests, and interrogated locals, including newcomers. The Vanguard articles mention that a crossfire occurred, 'as youths were said to have confronted soldiers for allegedly arresting the chief priest (Ose-Igba) of Kokori, said to have been the spiritual backbone of Kelvin and his gang'⁵.

The Vanguard article, referring to the September 2013 incidents, further mentions that:

'As at 4.00 pm, it was not really clear what the situation in Kokori was, as some persons said the youths had gone on rampage, while security agents were destroying houses. But soldiers, who stormed Kokori community with over up to 10 Hilux patrol vans, were visibly in control as they patrolled the streets. A source called one of our reporters to say the army had embarked on mass arrest, but Vanguard counted five persons that were arrested, Wednesday morning, including the chief priest, who was picked up later'⁶.

¹ Vanguard, *Kokori 'invasion': How most wanted kidnapper, Kelvin, breached security*, 23 September 2013, ([url](#)).

² Vanguard, *Kelvin, Delta kidnap kingpin arrested*, 25 September 2013, ([url](#)).

³ Vanguard, *Alleged kidnap kingpin, Kelvin resurfaces*, 19 September 2013, ([url](#)); Vanguard, *Kelvin, Delta most wanted kidnapper: Where is he, who'll catch him?*, 24 September 2013, ([url](#)).

⁴ Vanguard, *Kokori 'invasion': How most wanted kidnapper, Kelvin, breached security*, 23 September 2013, ([url](#)).

⁵ Vanguard, *24 hours after kelvin's arrest: Uneasy calm in Kokori*, 26 September 2013, ([url](#)); Vanguard, *Army, DSS nab Delta kingpin, Kelvin*, 26 September 2013, ([url](#)).

⁶ Vanguard, *24 hours after kelvin's arrest: Uneasy calm in Kokori*, 26 September 2013, ([url](#)).



The same article continues:

‘At about 5.00 pm, a villager, who spoke to Vanguard from Kokori said, “The situation is now hazy, the enraged youths, who did not know that Kelvin had been arrested, engaged the soldiers [...]” The youths were said to have been angered by the destruction of the community’s shrine, which a source said was where Kelvin derived his myth. By Thursday morning, Vanguard received an unconfirmed report that about 12 persons were killed and eight others injured in the clash’⁷.

On **27 September 2013**, a Vanguard article informs that, according to Delta State Governor Emmanuel Uduaghan, ‘the army had commenced a full-scale military operation at Kokori, the country home of arrested kidnap kingpin, Kelvin Aniarah, in Ethiope East Local Government Area of the state to flush out his associates and other criminals’, while dismissing speculation about heavy casualties. Uduaghan also said that ‘some persons had been arrested with in connection with the high profile kidnapping and armed robberies by the gang’ and confirmed the arrest of Kokori’s high priest⁸.

In an article dated **4 October 2013**, the Vanguard states that ‘no fewer than six schools and the only health centre in Kokori have been abandoned by teachers, students and medical personnel, following the siege laid to the community by soldiers’, who were searching for Kelvin’s armoury and associates⁹.

On **5 October 2013**, a Vanguard article informs that gunmen, suspected to be Kelvin’s lieutenants:

‘laid siege to the palace of the traditional Ovie of Agbon kingdom, HRM Ogurime-Rime, Ukori I, in Kokori on Friday and held the visiting Peoples Democratic Party, PDP, candidate for the October 12 bye-election in Delta Central senatorial district, Chief Emmanuel Aguariavwodo, former Minister of Information, Prof Sam Oyovbaire, and other members of the party’s Campaign Council, hostage, for more than one hour’¹⁰.

An article by the Vanguard dated **11 November 2013** informs that the ‘Urhobo Peace Initiative, UPI [...], appealed to the Joint Military Task Force, JTF, to stop further attacks on Kokori community in Delta State, insisting that the invasion of the community was causing economic hardship to the people’, while urging LIMUP members to do the same¹¹.

On **17 November 2013**, a Vanguard article reports that Nigerian soldiers recovered arms and ammunitions from alleged LIMUP members after a gun battle in Kokori, in of the LIMUP hide-outs. Three LIMUP members were arrested. The article also mentions that ‘some suspected LIMUP members, [...], abducted a Kokori leader, identified as Chief Fred Enufo, and took him to their den at

⁷ Vanguard, *24 hours after kelvin’s arrest: Uneasy calm in Kokori*, 26 September 2013, ([url](#)).

⁸ Vanguard, *Army begins full scale operations in Kokori – Uduaghan*, 27 September 2013, ([url](#)).

⁹ Vanguard, *Residents desert Kokori as soldiers search for Kelvin’s armoury, associates*, 4 October 2013, ([url](#)).

¹⁰ Vanguard, *Kokori: Kidnap kingpin Kelvin’s boys lay siege to palace*, 5 October 2013, ([url](#)).

¹¹ Vanguard, *‘Stop attacks on Kokori community’*, 11 November 2013, ([url](#)).



the outskirts of the town, where they gave the entire Kokori chiefs terms on repossession of a rifle lost by the group¹².

In an article dated **25 December 2013**, the Vanguard informs that Kelvin's kinsmen, 'under the aegis of Kokori Progress Union, resident in Lagos, have appealed to President Goodluck Jonathan and Delta State governor, Dr. Emmanuel Uduaghan, to withdraw soldiers from the community to give room for the restoration of normal life and activities'¹³. In January 2014, the governor responded by saying that 'there is no siege in Kokori, stressing that the military will not be stampeded to leave the place until they complete their mission'¹⁴.

According to a compilation of events by the Austrian Centre for Country of Origin and Asylum Research and Documentation (ACCORD), based on data from the Armed Conflict Location and Event Data Project (ACLED), 42 incidents killing 30 people were reported in Delta State **in 2014**. Among the affected locations was Kokori¹⁵.

A Vanguard article dated **13 April 2014** informs that 'remnants of the suspected Delta State kidnap kingpin, Kelvin Oniarah, currently facing trial, engaged the police and soldiers in a shoot out' in Kokori, leaving two of the gunmen dead. The article mentions that 'there was tension in the community in the past two days over the reign of terror by some gunmen'. The incident reportedly started after a prominent community leader refused to pay money, which one of the 'gangsters' tried to extort from him¹⁶.

According to a Vanguard article dated **21 November 2014**, 'policemen and soldiers commenced a joint operation to locate the den of the kidnapers who abducted the traditional ruler of Oporomor Kingdom, Bayelsa State, HRM Augustine Ebikeme' in Kokori. The article states that 'residents fled the community at dawn, following a warning by security operatives to the community to produce the royal father or give them information on the den of the kidnapers'¹⁷. Ebikeme was subsequently rescued by JTF troops, as reported by BBC Monitoring Africa on 26 November 2014¹⁸.

An article by the Vanguard, dated **24 February 2015**, states that after Kelvin's arrest, 'kidnapping, robbery and other vices have continued unabated in the [Kokori] community despite the presence of a military troop in the town'. The article mentions that 'a criminal gang is currently holding the community hostage and had set up a parallel government to the community's recognized leadership'. One of the residents is quoted as saying that "'the youths, despite the heavy presence of the military, steal rob with impunity. They break into houses at will, they also kidnap people for any amount, they

¹² Vanguard, *Kokori: Soldiers, kidnap kingpin's boys in gun battle*, 17 November 2013, ([url](#)).

¹³ Vanguard, *Kelvin's kinsmen beg Jonathan to lift siege on Kokori*, 25 December 2013, ([url](#)).

¹⁴ Vanguard, *Kevin: Uduaghan says military won't leave Kokori until...*, 10 January 2014, ([url](#)).

¹⁵ ACCORD, *Nigeria, Jahr 2014: Kurzübersicht über Vorfälle aus dem Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project (ACLED)*, 3 November 2015, ([url](#)).

¹⁶ Vanguard, *2 dead in gun duel between security forces, suspected kidnapers in Delta*, 13 April 2014, ([url](#)).

¹⁷ Vanguard, *Residents flee Kokoi, as Police, Army search for kidnapped Bayelsa monarch*, 21 November 2014, ([url](#)).

¹⁸ BBC Monitoring Africa, *Nigeria military task force rescues abducted traditional ruler in Bayelsa State*, 26 November 2014, ([url](#)).



can kidnap for N5,000; N10,000 etc.”, while another resident said that ‘the situation was getting a bit better with the arrest and killing of some suspected criminals recently’¹⁹.

An article by the Nigerian media THISDAY, dated 1 **November 2016**, mentions that ‘on 31 October 2016, [JTF] troops foiled vandalism of NPDC [Nigerian Petroleum Development Company] Well Head at Kokori Oil Field, Oil Mining Lease 30 located at Ethiope East Local Government Area of Delta State’²⁰.

In an article dated **23 May 2017**, The Guardian informs about an alleged attack by herdsmen on several communities in the Ethiope East Local Council of Delta State. According to a statement by the chief of the Abraka Police Division, one of the attacked communities was Kokori²¹.

Among the listed and consulted sources, no additional information on the security situation in Kokori village, particularly with regard to the LIMUP, could be found.

2. General information on the Liberation Movement of the Urhobo People (LIMUP) around June 2014, in Delta State, and more specifically in the village of Kokori

Among the listed and consulted sources, no information could be found regarding the LIMUP, around June 2014, in Delta State and Kokori village. Information found concerns prior years and months (see question 1).

A BBC Monitoring Africa article dated **12 June 2014** reports that JTF soldiers arrested Kelvin Ibruvwe’s armourer, Pearce Oyikobat, at Okpara Inland in Ethiope-East Local Council Area of Delta State. In a separate operation, the JTF ‘foiled an attempt by a group of suspected kidnapers to abduct a woman at Eku in Ethiope-East Local Council Area of the state’. The article does not mention, whether the suspected kidnapers were linked to LIMUP however²².

¹⁹ Vanguard, *In Kokori, you can be kidnapped for N5,000 ransom*, 24 February 2014, ([url](#)).

²⁰ THISDAY, *Soldiers Kill Two Suspected Militants in N’Delta*, 1 November 2016, ([url](#)).

²¹ The Guardian, *Tension in Delta communities over fresh attack by herdsmen*, 23 May 2017, ([url](#)).

²² BBC Monitoring Africa, *Nigerian army arrests suspected firearms supplier, others in Delta State*, 12 June 2014, ([url](#)).



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