

U.S. warns of Nigeria militant plots

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Associated Press

LAGOS, Nigeria - The United States warned Friday that Nigerian militants may be planning to expand their activities beyond the country's restive oil-producing southern regions.

Light, sweet crude prices rose more than \$1, to settle above \$59 a barrel, in part because of worries over the warning.

The warning by the United States, which receives more than 10 percent of its crude imports from Nigeria, said an unnamed militant group is "reportedly planning to escalate its activities in regions beyond its previous primary target areas," in the southern Niger Delta region where Nigeria's oil is pumped.

"Possible targets could include expatriate personnel, Western businesses or facilities and locales visited by tourists and foreigners in other regions of Nigeria," the Lagos-based consulate said in a statement.

It gave no details on any impending attacks and did not specify the potential militant "activities."

The main militant group in the Niger Delta did not immediately answer a request for comment.

A year of stepped-up militant violence across Nigeria's southern oil region has cut crude production in Nigeria by nearly 25 percent, helping send prices higher in international markets.

The militants say they want a greater cut of revenues paid to the federal government by oil companies operating in Nigeria. The government says the militants are little more than thieves who siphon oil from pipelines for overseas resale and kidnap oil workers for ransom.

Nigeria is Africa's biggest producer of petroleum.