The cases of Aba robberies and Onitsha mayhem

TOR Governor Orji Uzor Kalu of Abia state and his Anambra State counterpart, Gov. Peter Obi the times, indeed, can be distressful.

Reason: Whereas Movement for the Actualisation of the Sovereign State of Biafra (MASSOB) had almost made Onitsha, the commercial nerve centre of Anambra State ungovernable, daylight robbery had rendered Aba, also the commercial nerve centre of Abia State insecure for meaningful living. Both Onitsha, the commercial nerve centre of Anambra and Aba, are altogether the commercial nerve centres of the region

By LUKE OKORO and KALU OKWARA east of the Niger. The cities share a lot in common. Their position make them gateways-Onitsha to the entire east. Aba for the South-South states of Akwa Ibom and Cross Rivers. This explains their propensity to attract visitors and commercial interest.

Unfortunately, events in the two cities in recent times have thrown them into cities of discomfort perhaps, that is the cost good citizens are paying for keeping mum in the face of builtup for anarchy.

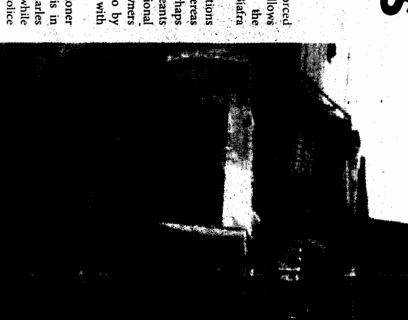
Indeed, for the past one week, residents

of Onitsha and Aba had been forced to remain in-doors by strange fellows represented by the Movement for the Actualisation of the Sovereign State of Biafra and armed robbers respectively.

For the two cities, business operations have been forced into hiding. Whereas MASSOB had taken over Onitsha, perhaps with dubious collusion with miscreants allegedly belonging to the National Association of Road Transport Owners (NARTO), Aba had been laid siege to by robbers, most of whom operating with deadly AK47 and LAR rifles.

As at last week, the state commissioner of police in Abia State whose office is in Umuahia, the state capital, Mr. Charles Akaya has since relocated to Aba, while Assistant Inspector-General of Police (AIG) for zone 9, Mr. Adewole Ajakaiye.

whose office is also at Umanhin has been



• Police Amoured Personnel Carrier (APC) set ablaze by a



to protect lives and property in the Nigerian is to bring sanity to the cities and to restore public confidence in the ability of the police Onitsha. The mission of the duo, as it were, (IGP), Mr. Sunday Ehindero to relocate to

whose staff had to embark on a two-day blinked an eye. them and their jobs, nobody would have discomfort armed robbers had brought on strike to express their anger against the have continued, perhaps, but for the banks, Indeed for Aba, the lawlessness would

loots possibly shared. of the cases, the robbers had adequate time their banks and even private homes. In most and their banks from the activities of men of have perhaps reached their destination and heeded, very late - after the robbers would to do their business while calls made to the Nigeria Police to protect and safeguard them region, had early this month gone on strike police were either not heeded and where the underworld, who had consistently raided in protest to what they called the inability the centre of Abia State and, indeed, the eastern

Some armed suspects arrested and paraded by police

evening and thoroughly dispossessed their of robbers had called at the supermarket one accessories, among others. gift items-expensive wrist watchers, beauty victims of earnings of that day, carting away supermarkets located on Compost road by Ikot Ekpene road. On the fateful day, a gang Take for instance, the case of two

were to come the following day at the same time to the same victims. This time around That was the first day. The same robbers ordered by the Inspector-General of Police

Yes, banks in Aba, the commercial nerve

around. They waited for a long time before and their other colleagues that robbers were victims, leaving them to wallow in their own at their supermarket. After duly humbling their operatives to alert them of the robbers presence as a reprisal for their effrontery to have put up them (victims) to again phone the police blood and pains, the robbers' then encouraged phone calls to the police and other supermarket disappearing. their victims were roundly and viciously beaten

affirmed last week that had been their lot in Bond best seller thriller, yet, residents of Aba Though the incident appears like a James-

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arrested two suspects - Obioma alleged robbery, which also actually participated in the to the effect that they claimed the life of the lad. confessional suspects had also made Nwagungwu Nwagungwu bewilderment, with the dastardly act. The He also confirmed that licking, their pain, in deep in connection and Chidi statements had been disbelief.

Aba residents are worried. attacked in one week, with bankers went on protest For instance, before the why the public and indeed isolated. This explains several millions stolen: strike, two banks were These cases are not

captured the business community is And one man who the public and the worry

th president of the Aba

escape, we show them and on the way to the station, got to his house, we got them as they were trying to trailing him until luck ran out on them. When we

with locally made pistols when our men on patrol the three gave up the ghost."

Another gang was shor at Okigwe Road, Faulks. They were robbing commuters of their handsets

Ehimaighe at Abuja on May 39." believed to have killed Inspector Ailemen Friday the other Chidiach, that is the gang that was "The other group up there Victor Nwala and

and people will go back to their businesses". With this trend, I believe Aba will be very calm

sigh to relief because the robbers keep on robbing. Even then, residents of Aba have not heaved a

> economic and social activities in the both residents and travellers, curbing de /elopment that has taken its toll on dusk-to-dawn curfew, in the city, a has resulted in the imposition of a Meanwhile, the crisis in Onitsha

attached to the NARTO fofficials who the state government through of a man by a. Mobile policeman sparked of the trouble was the killing motorists in Onitsha. banned from collecting toll fees from an Act of the State Assembly had According to sources, what really

embark on a rampage, setting ablaze the Onitsha prison and freeing about 204 inmates. This action made irate youths to

the utim telesions

brought to the people. to the untold hardship the curfew has lost their lives to the crisis in addition So far nine persons have allegedly

are coming. This situation has clearly made life unbearable for inter-state depending from where the travellers Bridge to Upper Iweka or vice versa from the Asaba end of the Niger the Onitsha are compelled to walk For instance, travellers to and via

aged, young, sick and those with substantial luggage, travellers, especially the

his predecessors who he of the military to help to town blamed the absence of effective security on restore normalcy justifying his invitation Governor Peter Obi in in the



Agriculture (ACCIMA)

soul (SOS) message to AIG through a save-ourbeen grounded. Of course, He had pleaded with the when he visited the AIG Chief Omoji should know because their business have the President to intervene the robberies, lawlessness. in Uauahia in the heat of Chief Omoji Kalu Omoji

command gave an answer Okugbo (alias TEM-TEM) the arrest one Chinedu when he confirmed doing? Mr. Felix Kigiha, most of the robbers. who was allegedly behind from Ogingwa, the kingpin Police (CSP) Aba Area chief superintendent of But what is the police

information, as against received from the public at the level of support Expressing . way of voluntary happiness

cry of the commissioner of police. Now, I given the kingdom of armed robbers to brass elaborated thus: "We believe God has can tell you that people are boldly giving useful information. You know that was the residents who are now coming out with second one is that we have to thank Aba us, that is why we are catching them. The what used to be in the past, the police top Okugbo was arrested. us information." He also explained how

on arrival from bagos, shooting and robbing robbers, who also had invaded a luxury bus, medical practitioner was felled by the bullets of a fortnight ago, a teenage son of an Aba-based

graves by these robbers. For instance, Sunday,

innocent souls are being sent to their early

The sad reality of the matter is the fact that

recent times.

was going on ran into the robbers' gun shots. the occupants. The teenager unaware of what

was that he was recovering. We have been Information we got from his colleagues "We went to his house and he escaped

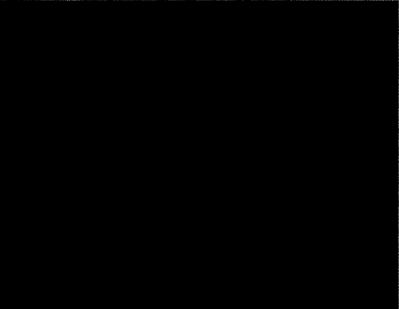
of the deceased, felled in his youth are still Akaya had confirmed the incident, the families

from a nearby Catholic Church. Although Mr.

He was coming back from early evening mass



Gov. Peter Obi



Gov. Orji Uzor Kalu

under control. This is in of Police, Mr. Mike Okiro consequently, ordered two act immediately. The IGP Olusegun crying for help, President miscreants". Following his vigilante and MASSOB. addition to AIG, Zone 9 and Mr. Ogbonna Onovo General of Police (IGP) to directed the Inspectorhad Bakassi, Ngige had Mr. Ajakaiya to relocate to Onitsha until Deputy Inspector-General hand over our security to But I said no, we cannot the situation is brought rie said: moadilijuju Obasanjo

regrouped in the night Major General Abdulazeez and burnt down a police when the Oba, Ogbaru, and Okpoko As at Wednesday, the to assist in restoring a contingent of soldiers Adewunmı, to Nkpor, Obosi, Nsugbe, on Onitsha was extended curfew initially imposed normalcy to the town Commanding station. 82 Mechanised Division, It did not stop there, General despatched ımposters (GOC),

of his predecessors analysts squarely on the door steps put the blame of the crisis have tried to link the Although Governor Obi