

Gun men lay siege to ECOWAS road:

By LUKKEY ABAWURU

• 3 cops, 7 others killed • 4 kidnapped

FEW weeks after policemen were officially barred from mounting road blocks or routine stop and search at night, on the Badagry Express Way, otherwise known as ECOWAS route, violent crimes have surged as robbers held residents and passersby hostage.

As at press time, about 10 persons including three policemen have been killed and over four others variously kidnapped by rampaging gunmen and ritualists who took the advantage of police absence on the road to perpetrate their dastardly acts.

Commercial bus operators have shunned the road, at night, to avoid being victims of men of the under world.

The Inspector-General of Police (IGP) Mr. Sunday Ehindero recently directed Lagos State Police command to withdraw its men from the road to enable easy passage of diplomats entering the state. The IGP said the order was in compliance with ECOWAS diplomatic treaty.

However, *Daily Champion* learnt that the directive followed series of petitions written by diplomats over alleged extortion and intimidation by Nigeria policemen at check points. Our correspondent also learnt that some of the petitions were personally addressed to President Olusegun Obasanjo who immediately contacted Ehindero over the issue.

Our correspondent reports that two of the deceased policemen would be buried this week at their respective towns. They were shot at Satellite axis of the road by fleeing gunmen after snatching exotic cars fortnight ago while another who has been buried was shot at Ojo.

Aside from this, the armed robbery suspects were said to have killed about four people last week at Agric bus stop, a distance of about 100 metres from Ojo Military Cantonment. The gunmen were said, to be responsible for the routine vehicular traffics at the place to enhance their operations. We learnt that they block the road with stationary cars, posing as bread hawkers and other items to cause traffic jams.

On penultimate Saturday, passengers and commuters

who operated along the road had diverse experiences on the hand of dare devil armed robbers. Some of the buses were searched and passengers were asked to lie flat on the floor while their pockets and bags were thoroughly searched.

A middle aged man was shot blank for raising his head. Two others were hit by stray bullet. At first gate, opposite FESTAC town, a Togolese man was shot and his cash and valuables looted at about 9pm last week.

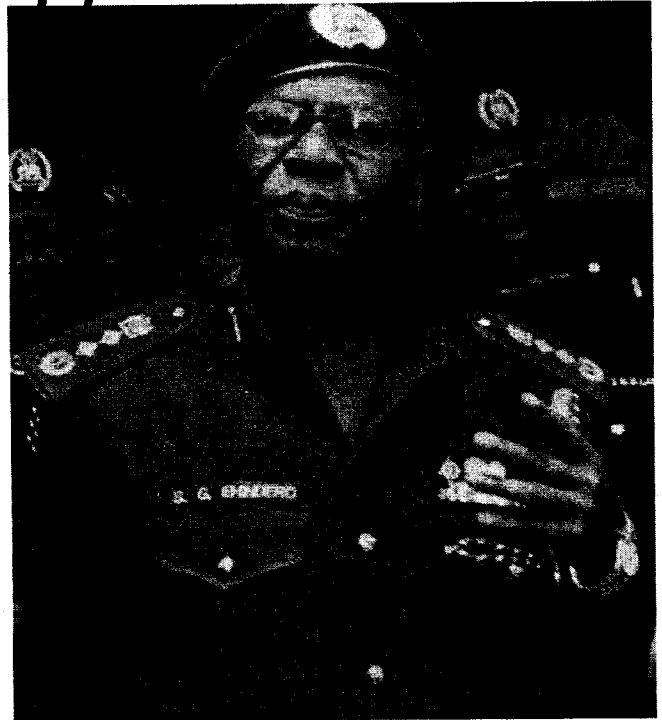
Also at Okokomaiko bus stop, two men were found dead and their vital organs removed. They were said to have been killed at night by unknown persons. Cases of missing persons have been reported to the police.

Residents of Iyanoba area have not known peace since the withdrawal of police at night. The community, which hosts Lagos State University (LASU) Ojo, was either enmeshed by cultists at the institution or submerged by the wave of insecurity in the area. Traders have been variously attacked at the place and goods worth several millions of naira looted from the shops.

Several shops have also been broken and looted at Ojo Alaba International Market, close to the express road.

A policeman attached to one of the commercial banks was killed recently when the gunmen stormed the bank at the market.

Similarly, at Balogun Market and ASPAMDA Market, robbery incidences were on the increase last week, our correspondent learnt that about 20 man-gang stormed the Balogun Market in two commercial buses with wall breaking instruments but



Mr. Sunday Ehindero, I.G.P.

was foiled by policemen from Area 'B' Command Festac.

Mr. Chris Ukachukwu, ex-officio member of Balogun executive said the recent wave of violent crimes in the market has become worrisome. According to him fear of the "bad boys" have gripped many traders and as such according to him, are planning to relocate to the east.

Ukachukwu noted that the bridge linking the Badagry Express road to the market is a black spot where marauders operate in the night. "If you have a flat tyre in the place or your car got spoilt in the area, if God is not on your side, you will become a dead person as the robbers would collect money and kill their victims.

A Catholic Church at Church bus stop, shortly after Okokomaiko bus stop, was attacked and money looted.

Also residents at the area are still counting their losses following house-to-house raid carried out by the suspects.

At Ijanikin, Agbara and environs, the story was the same as residents recounted their ordeals in the hands of gunmen.

A hotelier identified as Mike told *Daily Champion* how he was beaten black and blue by a gang of three. According to him, the men accosted him at Agbara and overtook his Mercedes V.boot car and demanded for the key of the car. Unfortunately when they attempted to drive the car, it developed fault and the gang turned on him and beat him severally.

Reacting to the issue, Lagos State Commissioner of Police, Mr. Emmanuel Adebayo said that his command has complied with the ECOWAS treaty directing police to vacate the road unless at designated point.

He noted that he was aware of the crime surge in the area, stating that he has recommended the establishment of observation units along the area to protect lives and property.

"If about four or five police observation centres, comprising of armed mobile policemen, who would only patrol the roads, robbers would flee in the area"

Traders commend police at highway

FOLLOWING the arrest of notorious armed robbery suspects, said to be terrorising Mile two and its environs, by policemen at high way patrol, traders at the area have applauded the effort of the police.

In a letter of

criminals have reigned in the place and the situation, he said, posed great concern to them.

Handing over the commendation letter to AIG at Zone two, Onikan, Nwafor said "since the arrest of the criminals and their