

I-N-S-E-C-U-R-I-T-Y

Robbers paint Lagos red

• Kill 3 foreigners, 12 others

• Journalist, banker, market women fall victims



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MILE Two/Badagry expressway is a major road in Lagos. It is the only link to neighbouring countries as Republic of Benin, Ghana, Cote d'Ivoire among others.

Aside from being an international route, the road leads to over four major markets in Lagos — Balogun International Market, Alaba International market, ASPAMDA and VESPA (shoe) international market. Also it is a link road to the ancient city of Badagry, many government establishments as FESTAC 77, Lagos State University, Ojo, Trade fair Complex, Volkswagen of Nigeria, Agbara industrial estate, Colleges of education, French College and even the new Bells university.

Similarly, about 30 per cent of Lagos population mainly the Igbo reside in this area.

With the above, the road is expected to be the hub of commercial activities and as such, a vantage beat for robbers and other criminal minded people.

It is reasonably expected that a high level of the ever busy road which is fast dilapidating as a result of lack of maintenance. One can spend five hours for a journey of 200 kilometer.

But the road has become a death trap; residents are sure of going out but not sure of returning as a result of the menace of armed robbers who operate at will on the road.

At the last count about 15 people including foreign nationals visiting the country have been variously killed within this month.

Last month, about three policemen and seven civilians were

separately killed by gun men. Many people including students have been kidnapped and their whereabouts is still unknown, other cases of one chance robbers abound in the area.

Various criminal activities such as car theft, rituals, stealing, breaking and entering one chance, kidnapping, etc. are on the rise along the road.

A journalist who was returning home, late, this week narrowly cheated death. He was beaten and all his personal effects were stolen. As if that was not enough, the robbers who operated with ease designed his head with bottles. He is receiving medication from a nearby hospital at PPL bus stop, after LASU gate.

Several official cars conveying staff of several banks home after the day's job have been variously attacked.

Traders and businessmen, who appear to be the target of the robbers, have different tales to tell. Monies on several currencies have been stolen and victims, in some cases have been killed.

Indeed the road is a terror. Almost every day, rampaging gunmen kill average of four to six persons at a particular spot between Ojo barrack and LASU gate.

Daring vehicle operator, who could summon courage to take the risk, cashed in on the regular exercise to hike transport fares because to them, plying the routes especially at night, is a risky venture.

Last week a woman was shot point blank at Iyana Iba at about 5:30 am. The robbers who operated in motor bike (okada) shot her inside a car but her brother was fortunate to have escaped and the robbers fled.

People who were waiting for

early morning bus screamed as they scampered for safety.

Daily Champion investigation revealed that the robbers, who at times operate in Military uniforms cause vehicular traffic between Agric bus stop, a stone throw from the main gate of Ojo barracks, and Iyana Iba junction, very close to LASU main gate.

This writer, who has secretly monitored the activities of the marauders both early morning and late nights, reports that some of the robbers pose as passengers from Mile Two and rob the occupants at trade fair (under bridge). Others also enter bus at Barrack bus stop, and rob the occupants before Oduenro within the barrack and collect all their possessions in front of soldiers from the barrack.

But the major operators hide inside the bush in the abandoned Volkswagen of Nigeria and attack vehicles in turn at traffic.

Most of these robbers at Volks have syndicates including women whom they use to cause hold up at the place.

At times they use the touts to block the road. Towards this, the market women and hawkers of several items would block the road so as to make it difficult for vehicles to move.

Those pretending to be selling bread would block the road with non mobile vehicles to assist their agents.

The men of the underworld at times retreat to the barrack after operation while fortunate victims would watch them gallantly and joyously enter the barrack.

Despite the fact that the area has over four police stations including Onireke police station, Ojo Police station, PPL Police station and Okokomaiko police station with over 200 police personnel, no security official patrol the area, instead the policemen at the area are seen extorting money from motorists who may have escaped the danger.

The policemen pretend as if their duty does not include protecting lives of citizenry.

Daily Champion learnt that majority of the robbers are hiding inside the barracks, knowing that policemen cannot enter the barrack to pursue criminals. Also the students of LASU have been variously arrested in connection with robbery operation fuelling speculation that the robberies may have been master minded by the students, the soldiers or some disgruntled policemen.

Recently, at PPL bus stop, a cultist group believed to be students of LASU, Ojo, machetted four people to death in the open and police ignored them. The students walked back to the school.

However, one of the robbery suspects confessed recently how a Deputy Superintendent of Police (DSP) (names withheld) aided and abetted them in their robbery escapades.

Aside from killings and robbing, several exotic cars have been stolen and smuggled into neighbouring countries.

Similarly, residents of communities along the road, as Tedi Village, Ojo, Ajangbadi, Iyana Iba, Okokomaiko Igbolerin, Oke-odo, Iyanasashi, Ijanikin, Otto, Cele NKA, Agboro Iba etc are making frantic efforts to stop the incident. Many commuters were said to have gone to neighbouring countries to hire (vigilante) private security men who allegedly operate with charm to patrol their areas in the face of neglect by the police authorities and other relevant agencies.

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. Recently two brothers returning to the country from Togo were killed at Maza Maza near Festac gate and their monies stolen.

Similarly, at Balogun Market and ASPAMDA market, robbery incidences are on the increase. Last week, a 20-man gang of armed robbery suspects stormed the Balogun market in two commercial buses with wall breaking instruments. Their efforts were foiled by policemen from Area E Command, FESTAC.

Mr. Kevin Ukachukwu, ex-officio member of Balogun executive said the recent waves of violent crimes in the market has become worrisome.

According to him, fear of the "bad boys" have gripped many traders and as such many, 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 at 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



President Olusegun Obasanjo

dead person as they robbers would collect money and kill their victims.

A Catholic church located 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 by the suspects.

At Ijaniki, Agbara and environs, the story was the same as residents recounted their ordeals in the hands of gun men.

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

But is there nothing police could do or are they bereft of evolving strategies to combat the crime?

Reacting to this recently, some senior policemen along the road told our correspondent that they were handicapped to deal with the robbers.

According to one of them, the command directed them to steer clear of the road at night.

However, reacting to the issue recently, Lagos State Commissioner of Police Mr. Emmanuel Adebayo said, "We are ready to pounce on

any criminal and cannot be bereft of strategies and ideas to combat them but we have to obey the authorities, you know that the road is ECOWAS road and according to ECOWAS treaty, no policeman is sighted on the route except on designated points, we complied with the directive".

Adebayo said that he had however suggested to the authorities to establish Observation centre along the road which would empower police men to patrol the area.

He noted that the centres which would comprise of 40 mobile and regular policing would patrol the area without blocking the road or checking vehicular particulars but for five purposes.

"If about four or five police observation centres are established along the road robbers would flee the area, I suggested that vehicles be provided and other logistics knowing the vulnerable nature of the area.

Daily Champion further gathered that President Olusegun Obasanjo had following a complaint from ambassador of one of the neighbouring countries over police check points in the area directed the Inspector-General of Police, Mr. Sunday Ehindero to vacate policemen from routes in compliance with the ECOWAS treaty.

Group protests, alleges flouting of govt. rules

A group, Pharmaceutical Dealers Association, Apapa has protested over what it described as non compliance of Federal government's directive in clearing pharmaceutical products at the Apapa Wharf by the new concessionaire that recently took over the port.

The group which carried placards at the port, frowned at the alleged concessionaires transfer of Pharmaceutical products to the bonded terminals. But the airport police quickly dispersed them.

Speaking on behalf of the group, Chief Joseph Odebeay warned that continued disregard of government directives could cause trouble at the port.

He, therefore, urged the Director General of National Agency for Food, Drugs Administrations and Control (NAFDAC), Professor Dora Akunyili to prevail on the

concessionaire to henceforth stop transferring pharmaceutical products to any where.

Trouble, he said, started when pharmaceutical products were allegedly transferred to satellite ports and bonded warehouse for clearing by the concessionaire against the order of the government.

According to him, several efforts to stop the concessionaire to obey allegedly government directives failed, hence the protest.

Calling relevant authorities to intervene, Odebeay said the activities of the concessionaire has made it difficult to clear pharmaceutical products at the port.

However, a source from the concessionaire who described the protest as wasteful noted that it was done to curb fraud in the port.



Cross section of armed robbery suspects arrested by Police recently

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