

Govt deploys more troops in Anambra

A JOINT team of the military and police officers has been deployed in Nnewi area of Anambra State, which was at the weekend gripped by violence.

The deployment was at the instance of the governor, Mr. Peter Obi, who has had to grapple with multiple incidence of violent eruptions in the last one month.

Obi, in a state broadcast

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From Chuks Collins (Akwa), Lawrence Njoku (Enugu) and Alex Olise (Lagos)

yesterday, restated his administration's commitment to restoring peace and empowering the youth, many of whom, he reasoned were being used to foment trouble, being idle.

The force Public Relations Officer, Mr. Haz Iwendi yesterday confirmed that buses and a consignment of military camouflage had been seized from suspected hoodlums.

According to him, the joint military and police task force are on trail of the fleeing suspect that on Sunday attacked a police station at Nnewi.

Giving more insight into the cause of the mayhem the police spokesperson said: "Over 300 hoodlums attacked the station

with dangerous weapons. Five of the attackers were shot dead and two policemen, a sergeant and inspector were killed and many other policemen injured."

Iwendi added that the Inspector-General of Police Mr. Sunday Ehindero, had ordered manhunt on the fleeing attackers.

He, however, could not

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Govt moves troops to Anambra

confirm the actual number of suspects arrested but disclosed that many were already in police net.

The inspector-general of police held a security meeting with top officers yesterday in Abuja calling for better security across all the police commands in the country.

Against the backdrop of the attack, Governor Obi disclosed that more major towns in the state had now been brought under protection and surveillance of the security operatives.

In the state broadcast, Obi reiterated the commitment of his administration to stamp out all forms of brigandage, thuggery and anti-social behaviours. He said: "Government has lined up a number of programmes and projects to occupy the attention of young, skilled and unskilled Anambrians so that they do not go into crime on account of idleness".

The chairman of the state council of traditional rulers and Igwe of Nnewi, HRH Kenneth Orizu III, condemned the torching of the police station. The monarch urged his subjects to report any suspected trouble maker at once to his palace or nearest police station.

Also, two other groups from the town- Nnewi concerned citizens, and Ife Nnewi, in press statements condemned the assault on the police and the community.

They blamed the police for being lax, saying, "If the police had been alert to their duty, they would have detected the crime and nipped same in the bud". The two groups claimed that the hoodlums were known to have perfected their plans to strike at the home of citizens of the town before launching out.

The documents which were signed by Chief Stephen Odobulu, (president) and Mr. Goddy Adibe secretary urged the perpetrators "to desist from importing and dispensing violence on the commercial city of Nnewi".

On other measures put

in place to ensure the hoodlums leave the state completely, Obi said that the hit-and-run guerilla pattern now being used showed that "We have forced them out from completed buildings, to uncompleted buildings. Soon we will drive them into the bush and out of the state completely". He requested citizens to report to appropriate authorities any suspicious movement, "because their nefarious activities affect everyone".

Before now, the governor noted, "people hire thugs/hoodlums to protect themselves, settle personal scores, collect rent, escort goods, keep landlords in check, settle debts and or marital disagreements, etc but today, we have resolved to change all that".

Meanwhile, the All Progressives Grand Alliance [APGA] yesterday alleged that the current violence in Anambra State, was being masterminded by some politicians with a view to instigating the Federal Government to impose emergency rule in the state.

The party therefore, vowed to resist any attempt to suspend the

democratically elected government of Mr. Obi, and urged the Federal Government not to succumb to any pressure to impose emergency rule. It noted that Onitsha had become calm with citizens going about their businesses without fear.

Addressing journalists in Enugu, National Chairman of APGA, Chief Victor Umeh noted that the incident at Nnewi calls for the need for a mop-up operation by security agents against those behind the attack.

He also denied speculations that he had parted ways with Obi, saying that he has enjoyed a cordial relationship with the governor, while at the same time, the party had given the governor an open hand to run the administration of the state the way he wished. Umeh said: "Onitsha which was the major flashpoint for the past two months has regained normalcy: people now mind their businesses. It is not surprising that the hoodlums who seized the motor parks operating under NARTO have relocated outside the city. They have taken their activities to Okwulobia and Nnewi. The Federal Government needs to

direct a mop-up operation in these new areas where the renegades have relocated."

According to Umeh, the seizure of the parks by the National Association of Road Transport Owners [NARTO] has denied the state government of funds running into billions of naira, adding that despite being outlawed since last year, the NARTO members were still operating in the state.

The APGA boss who spoke further on the attacks, said it had a semblance of what was meted out to supporters of the party during the 2003 general elections when "sponsored persons in military uniforms unleashed attacks on party faithful in an attempt to rig the elections".

He tasked the Anambra State Commissioner of Police, Mr. John Haruna, to "carry out thorough investigations of those who owned the vehicles that were used in the Nnewi attack and how they (the vehicles) were procured for the attack." He added that the flags of the Movement for Actualisation of the Sovereign State of Biafra [MASSOB] used by the thugs during the Nnewi incident were meant to

hoodwink the public into thinking that it was the ethnic nationality group that was behind the violence.

He exonerated MASSOB from the violence, saying the organisation has no financial interest in Anambra State which has been eroded by the present administration in the State. "People should wonder why the same violence is not going on in Owerri, MASSOB headquarters, Aba, Enugu and other places with MASSOB elements. All those with genuine grievances should abandon violence and table their problems with the governor who is willing to listen," he stated.

Umeh expressed confidence that the governor would emerge victorious at the end, while restating that there was no going back on the measures already taken to curb activities of miscreants in the state.

He thanked the Federal Government for the concern it had so far shown in the crisis-torn state, while asking for more military and police patrols in the state, assuring that with sustained action the hoodlums would flee the state in the shortest possible time.

Atiku on chances of PDP presidential candidate

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with the consequences of their actions.

According to him, it is not correct to assume that it is only a person the president wants that will emerge as the PDP's presidential flag bearer.

The Vice President described such an assumption as naive since, according to him, the leadership of the party is totally different from the over 5000 delegates expected to vote independently during the convention. Most of the delegates are not yet known, he noted.

Abubakar explained that the president might only have his way if "there is no election, unless the elections are not free and fair, unless they are manipulated or unless they are twisted to favour someone, which means there is no level playing ground."

expressed fears over the coming convention, "as was the case in such congresses in the past." Abubakar said that he only wished that the party would have learnt its lessons from the crisis plaguing it. The Vice President who declined to state what he would do if he loses the PDP ticket, also said he was not worried about the activities of the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) since he had not used his position to accumulate wealth.

He said: "I am not worried. I don't think I have accumulated wealth in this administration. If anything, I have lost."

On suspicions that he had accumulated wealth through his office, he said: "I have no access to public funds, I don't award contracts. I have no budget, I have no way of accessing public funds."

told my children they should not expect any money in my account. You will not go to any of my accounts now and find credit balance other than my salary."

Asked if he was stupendously wealthy, Abubakar described himself as a comfortable, successful businessman and a politician. He attributed all these to the tremendous goodwill he enjoyed. According to him, every business that he has invested in has turned out to be successful.

The schism in the presidency is in the public domain and has been long-drawn. At a point, President Obasanjo accused Abubakar of disloyalty, while the latter said that his loyalty lay only with Nigeria and the constitution and not with individuals.

It was at the heat of the

Obasanjo should have a third shot at the presidency, which Abubakar opposed. An aide of Obasanjo once advised Abubakar to resign while the Vice President's camp offered the same advice to the president on the alleged grounds of subversion of the constitution.

Abubakar yesterday told the BBC that he entertained no fear that the current situation could scuttle his bid to succeed the president. He, however, expressed fears that there might not be a level playing ground at the PDP's convention, as witnessed in the past.

Whichever way the party leaders go, he said, the PDP would live with either commendation or condemnation from the members and the public.

Vice President Atiku also yesterday in Abuja urged