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## Police parade 23 robbery suspects in Lagos

*By Alex Olise and Odita Sunday*

**THE** police in Lagos yesterday paraded 23 suspected armed robbers caught terrorising people in different parts of the state.

At a special briefing after the parade, the Commissioner of Police, Mr. Bashiru Azeez, said four of the suspects had attacked a hotel at Itire in Surulere area of Lagos, where they robbed and raped commercial sex workers.

The arrest of the robbers was made possible after the Divisional Police Officer (DPO), Itire, Mr. John Kennebi, received a distress call. He led a team of anti-robbery squad to the scene where the policemen recovered in the process one Volkswagen Bus marked XN 265GGE, one Jack knife, two locally made pistols, 13 live cartridges and four expended cartridges.

In another incident, a member of a robbery gang, which specialised in attacking motorists on the Third Mainland Bridge was shot dead while other members fled with bullet wounds.

Another major operation was carried out by an anti-robbery team attached to the State Criminal Investigation Department (SCID) Panti, which arrested members of a nine-man gang on a mission to attack a bank in Osun State. The security agents tracked them down at Iyana Ipaja area after receiving information on the planned robbery.

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Also on June 12, 2007, police at Okokomaiko area of Lagos shot dead three suspected members of a robbery gang and arrested others. The robbers, who were operating on motorcycles attempted to rob the owner of a Toyota Sienna Bus. The police recovered one AK-47 rifle with registration number 3143 and three empty magazines.

During a search in a robbery suspect's house, police at Ilasa also discovered one revolver pistol. Most of the robbery suspects who spoke to The Guardian during their parade admitted they went into the act due to the harsh economic situation in the country.

Others said they were innocent of the charges, claiming that they were arrested while smoking Indian hemp in dark corners.

The commissioner of police shortly after the parade said: "Henceforth, our actions and successes would be speaking for us. We are in a haste to reduce crime to an insignificant level in total compliance with the no-crime temperament policy of the Inspector-General of Police and the unquantifiable support of Governor Babatunde Raji Fashola and the good people of Lagos State.

"I hereby appeal to Lagosians to be law-abiding and to exercise understanding and patience with our men in the course of performing our duties," the police chief added.

About six of the robbers paraded yesterday were seen with old wounds believed to have been sustained from past robbery operations.

In several cases, robbers now rob from street to street in groups in different locations within the metropolis.

Azeez said: "I am pleased to inform you that the new strategy and collaborative efforts have necessitated policemen in uniform and patrol vehicles to be stationed on all bridges that are prone to traffic snarl and attack by hoodlums in Lagos. Third Mainland, Apongbon, Ojuelegba and Eko Bridges and other major roads, as well as black spots."

According to him, police motorcycles with armed security men now patrol identified perennial traffic hold-up areas to solve the encumbrance suffered by patrol vehicles in all nooks and crannies of the state. Plain clothed operatives are also to infiltrate identified areas among other strategies put in place to make Lagos a safe haven.

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