

# Police clarify reports on luxury bus robbery deaths

**T**HE police authorities yesterday clarified reports on a Young Shall Grow luxury bus that ran over 20 passengers on the Benin Ore Road.

Inspector-General of Police, Ogbonna Onovo, who led a team to the Senate ad hoc committee investigating the incident, told the panel that the passengers were crushed by an oncoming truck trying to escape from robbers'.

Onovo and his team produced the luxury bus and truck drivers and debunked the earlier report that the passengers were crushed to death by the luxury bus driver on the robbers orders.

Testifying before the committee, the bus driver, Mr. Okechukwu Okaro, said the incident occurred on July 1, 2009 while he was conveying the passengers from Enugu to Lagos.

**From Gbade Ogunwale, Assistant Editor, Abuja**

According to him, the robbers checkmated his attempt to beat their barricade by deflating the bus' gas tank, thereby demobilising the vehicle.

Okaro said he abandoned the vehicle and passengers and escaped into the bush where he hid till day break.

Truck driver Osahon Idahosa said he was driving on the highway when he came across the robbers and the demobilised luxury bus.

According to him, he observed that the road was littered by figures he could not immediately ascertain to be human beings.

"I saw from a distance that the road was littered with some objects I could not immediately identify. I then attempted to make a u-turn, but I discovered that the

number of robbers behind me was more than the ones in front"

"As I approached, the robbers were shooting and shouting at me to stop. But I attempted to escape and I ran the truck over the objects on the road. My truck fell flat in the process and my motor boy and I were able to escape into the bush."

"In the morning when I went to the scene, accompanied by policemen from the police station where I went to report the case, I discovered that the objects I ran over were actually human beings and they were all crushed to death".

Corps Marshall of the Federal Road Safety Corps (FRSC), Mr. Osita Chidoka, while corroborating the accounts of the police and the drivers, said the incident occurred on July 1, last year and not

February 25, 2010 as reported by a newspaper a few days ago.

Onovo and Chidoka expressed dismay over the inaccurate reports and pleaded with the authorities to cross-check the fact from the relevant security agencies for first hand information.

The Police and the FRSC chiefs lamented that their men operate in a hostile and volatile environment across the nation. They said they lose some of their men to bandits armed with sophisticated weapons almost on a daily basis.

Onovo told the senators that the rank and file in the police can no longer survive on their present N21, 000 monthly salary.

He said security in the country has been worsened by corruption, greed and political, economic and religious upheavals in different parts of the country.