

Residents jittery over killings, robberies in Delta communities

Posted By: Shola O'Neil on: October 16, 2015 In: Niger Delta No Comments



•Mr. Oyibo after his attack

People living in the Oil City of Warri and environs and other parts of Delta State are living in constant fear once again. Unmitigated incidents of armed robbery, bizarre killings and other violent crimes spike in the commercial nerve centre and other communities of the oil-rich state.

Investigations carried out by *Niger Delta Report* revealed that dozens of persons have been killed, maimed and robbed by daredevil robbers, whose operations have sent chill down the spines of residents and made the twin cities of Effurun and Warri living hell for inhabitants, within the past couple of weeks.

Our findings revealed that seven persons were killed between Wednesday last week and the time of filing this report on Tuesday afternoon.

On Wednesday, October 7, Mr Stephen Omare, younger brother to Frank Omare, a former Commissioner for Environment in the state, was shot by yet unknown gunmen around the Omimi Link Road between Refinery and NPA roads in Effurun, Uvwie Local Government Area.

Eyewitness told our reporter that the young man, an engineer, was on his way to an appointment with some friends and his kinsmen at a popular hotel on Refinery Road when he was caught in the hail of bullets from his attackers. His car was badly riddled with bullets and he was pronounced 'Dead on Arrival' at a private hospital where he was rushed to shortly afterwards.

A few days later, on a Sunday along Jakpa Road, a commuter was gunned down by armed men who rode in a tricycle (popularly called *keke*), around the White House (*Asheshe*) Road Junction. The cause of the broad day light murder was unknown, although some eyewitness told our reporter that the hoodlums who killed the young man ostensibly thought he was carrying cash.

"They were probably trailing another victim, who was riding in a *keke*, because after shooting the man, they went in search of money inside the *keke* but could find none," a bystander said.

In-between those two cold blooded killings, there was a report about the shooting of a mobile

policeman along the Okumagba Avenue area of Warri. The fate of the security agent was not immediately known.

Similarly, there have also been reports of incessant robbery operations along the busy Airport Road and other parts of Warri and Effurun.

Last Friday, several persons were casually dispossessed of cash and other valuables along the busy Airport road in broad daylight, despite the torrential downpour in the area. The criminals, who mostly rode in tricycle, wielded various sizes and calibres of firearms.

The incidents have raised concerns over bloody “ember months” that are similar to that of 2011, when up to 100 people were mowed down across several areas by hoodlums who terrorised the state in Toyota Hilux vans, until the gang was neutralised.

Already, people are fleeing the Udu/Orhumworun areas of the state following relentless attacks by knives, machete, broken bottle and cudgel-wielding cult gangs and armed robbers. The notorious groups have killed and maimed several people, as reported in *Niger Delta Report* of October 2.

Mrs Omamurhomun Ukana, one of the latest victims of violent robbery in that area, was killed on her way home on Thursday, September 10. She was stabbed on the back, head and neck and bled to death shortly after the attack.

A similar fate was visited on Mr Ogheneruona Oyibo, a staff of a state broadcasting outfit, who was lucky to survive with lifelong physical and psychological scars.

Residents of the areas blamed the parlous security situation on the perceived neglect of the affairs of the Central and South districts of the state by Governor Ifeanyi Okowa.

“Since he assumed office, the regularly security meeting that used to be held in the Governor’s Office Annexe in Warri, has stopped. There is lack of government presence in these areas. The criminals are filling the void left by government’s absconding from its duty,” a source said.

Recall that before his inauguration, the governor had reportedly vowed to close down Warri. Although Governor Okowa debunked the report, he is yet to attend any official function at the Warri Annexe, nearly five months into his government.

A security source that spoke on condition of anonymity because of security reasons, said the usual government support to security agencies in the state have stopped, ostensibly due to paucity of funds.

“Most of the security agencies are not getting the usual government support again. If you go to some police stations now, there is no patrol vehicle. I am particularly aware of the situation at Ugborikoko Police Station, which has just one patrol van and that was provided by the Inspector-General of Police, and not the state government,” the source added.

However, a cross section of individuals who spoke with our reporter, accused the government and security agencies of not being proactive in tackling crime in the state. Some of them, who blamed the increase in robbery incident on joblessness and government’s tightening the noose on illegal bunkering, said these fallouts are expected.

“If the security agencies are on top of their games, they should have nipped the crimes in their bud before what we are experiencing now,” a lawyer said.

Speaking further, the lawyer, who is also a security expert, advised the state government to look inward, particularly by holding meetings with former militant leaders in the state.

“Some of these guns are owned by ex-militants. Government should address the issue of ex-militants; the Governor should call them to a meeting and pressure them to rein in their boys. They know these boys, you can’t say you are a militant, you receive money from government and yet you are still terrorising the state.”

Meanwhile, the state government recently appointed Mr David Tonwe as chairman of the state security apparatus. The move is seen as a bid to stem the wave of violent crimes across the state.

Attempts to get Tonwe to speak on the unpalatable prevailing security situation were futile at press time, as he did not answer our call. Police Public Relations Officer, Celestina Kalu, a Deputy Superintendent of Police, was also not reachable.

However, a senior police officer in the Warri Area Command said the increase in robbery and other violent crimes was expected during the last three months of the year, stressing that the police was working on how to curb the marauding hoodlums.