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## Two killed, 69 arrested in Onitsha

**John Ameh and  
Ihuoma Chiedoze**

**A** massive crackdown on members of the Movement for the Actualisation of the Sovereign State of Biafra in Anambra State commenced on Tuesday with at least two of them shot dead at the 46 Silas/Works Road, base of the organisation in Onitsha.

The raid, which was carried out by a combined team of the police and the military, also led to the arrest of 69 suspected MASSOB members.

Five guns, including an AK-47 rifle, were recovered during the operation said to have been led by one Col. John Enenche.

It was however not a  
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**Dabada's life**

two of my staff; it is a trial

preserve his life and that of members of his cabinet.

inauguration, we suspected that something was amiss,

and the image of its citizens."

## Two killed, 69 arrested in Onitsha

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smooth onslaught by the joint team as five policemen were wounded by the MASSOB members.

Before then, a 75mm unexploded bomb was recovered from the Akpaka Forest enclave of MASSOB in a separate raid by the Police Bomb Disposal Unit.

Two locally-made explosives, said to be capable of destroying a bungalow, were also found in the enclave, located just a stone's throw from the Onitsha Government Reservation Area.

The newly appointed Commissioner of Police, Anambra State Command, Mr. Haruna John, disclosed the latest developments at a news conference in Onitsha.

John said, "We are in a joint operation with the military to ensure that all touts and miscreants are flushed out of motor parks within the shortest time."

He stated that the two suspects were shot dead after they reportedly resisted arrest and engaged the team in a gun battle.

The commissioner alleged that the "miscreants" defied the curfew, robbed and molested innocent citizens in Onitsha on Saturday.

He added, "Two days ago, a Police Inspector was kidnapped at Nkpor by the same people while on his way home."

"He is still missing; another policeman who was on escort duty was also kidnapped on Silas/Works Road."

"If you add that to the fact that two other policemen have been missing since March, it will bring the number to four."

"We are doing everything possible to find these policemen though we won't rule out the fear that one or two may have died. We are very hopeful."

On how the team will

enforce the proscription of MASSOB and the National Association of Road Transport Owners, John explained that leaders of all the proscribed bodies had been invited to a meeting on Wednesday.

"The government's order takes effect from July 3, 2006 but we are prepared to repossess the motor parks and the markets immediately," he added.

The Commanding Officer, Police Bomb Disposal Unit, Enugu Zone, Mr. Manasser Awanyah, who displayed the recovered bomb, said that it was a rocket-propelled type.

Awanyah said, "It is a 75mm bomb and it is not made in Nigeria. It looks like one of those left behind after the Nigerian Civil War."

"We also recovered other explosive devices made locally. One of them was ac-

tually used to injure five policemen."

Meanwhile, the Federal Government has set up a four-member panel to probe the burning down of the Onitsha Prisons and release of over 200 inmates by hoodlums.

The panel, which is headed by a former Director in the Presidency, Mr. Peter Egure, is to submit its report within four weeks.

The Secretary to the Government of the Federation, Chief Ufot Ekaette, who inaugurated the committee in Abuja, said that the government was disturbed by the incident.

The Panel's terms of reference are:

- Ascertain what actually happened that led to the jailbreak;

- Determine the involvement or otherwise in

the incident of members of the MASSOB; NARTO, and any other sundry groups operating in the city;

- Ascertain the role played by the Nigeria Police Force and particularly whether its men could have averted the incident;

- Ascertain the role played by individuals in the incident and apportion blames accordingly;

- Ascertain why the assistance of the military was not sought on time;

- Make appropriate recommendations on those found wanting and measures to be taken with a view to forestalling future recurrence; and

- Advise on any matter incidental to the terms of reference.

Egure promised that the panel would not disappoint the government in its assignment.

## FG may bar Investcom from NITEL bid

Chijama Ogbu and Everest Amaefule

THE Federal Government may bar the Beirut-based Investcom LLC from the bid for the acquisition of 51 per cent controlling stake in Nigerian Telecommunications Limited following its acquisition by MTN Group Ltd., Africa's largest mobile phone company.

Shareholders of MTN voted overwhelmingly on Tuesday to approve the \$5.5 billion deal for the acquisition of Investcom LLC.

According to the Chairman of MTN, Mr. Cyril Ramaphosa, the shareholders in a meeting in Johannesburg voted 99.99 per cent in favour of the deal.

With the approval by the shareholders, it is expected that MTN will take over the operations of the company, which is among the seven firms shortlisted for the ne-

gotiated sale of NITEL.

MTN will pay about \$1,120 per customer for Investcom, an acquisition which will give it base in 10 new countries, including Sudan, Afghanistan and Saudi Arabia.

The new countries are in addition to the MTN's presence in Nigeria and Iran.

The company will use its own cash, issue new shares, sell about \$1.1 billion of corporate bonds and borrow about \$3.85 billion to fund the purchase.

Meanwhile, MTN on Monday received a Baa3 rating, the lowest investment grade, from Moody's Investment Service ahead of the bond sale, the biggest ever by a publicly traded South African company.

MTN Nigeria, which had shown interest in the purchase of government shares in the country's first national carrier, was disquali-

fied to avoid creating a monopoly in that sector.

Our correspondents learnt that both the Bureau of Public Enterprises and the NCC are watching the MTN/Investcom deal closely to see if it will affect Investcom's compliance with regulatory issues in its bid for NITEL.

It was further gathered that the BPE had sent the list of the seven firms originally pre-qualified for the negotiated sale of NITEL to the Nigerian Communications Commission for vetting.

A source added that the BPE was yet to get response from the NCC on the seven firms' compliance with regulatory issues.

When our correspondent spoke with the Head, Public Communications of the BPE Mr. Joe Chigbo Anichebe, on the phone on Tuesday, he confirmed that

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