

Gunmen kidnap seven persons in Onitsha

Gunmen have kidnapped seven persons in Onitsha, Anambra State, amidst the worsening security situation in the commercial city.

Investigations by *Saturday Punch* revealed that the victims worked for a dredging company on the bank of the River Niger. But it was unclear as at press-time on Friday whether some of them were foreigners. The attack reportedly took place on Thursday night when the kidnappers, who operated in a flying boat, seized the victims at the river bank by Ose-Okwodu.

Armed with rifles, the suspects allegedly sped off with the victims to Enechele, an island on the River Niger, which also borders the Anambra River. Marine policemen were said to have been drafted to the scene when they were alerted, but reportedly learnt that the kidnappers had demanded to see the chief executive officer of the company.

Saturday Punch gathered that the kidnappers wanted to "negotiate" the release of

John Ameh, Onitsha

the workers with the CEO, whose name could not be immediately established. The suspects had however warned that they would kill the workers if the CEO dared to report the incident to the police.

The police had gunned down more than 40 robbery suspects in Anambra State in the last two months in a renewed onslaught against crime, 14 of whom were said to have been killed in Onitsha, around the River Niger bank. The Commissioner of Police, Anambra State Command, Mr. Oliver Osuchukwu, who confirmed the kidnapping of the workers to *Saturday Punch*, attributed it to "criminal elements."

Osuchukwu said that he was informed of the incident by a marine officer, adding that he had ordered an investigation into the matter. He said, "Anything that has to do with abduction is criminal; there are criminal elements operating in that area. Our men are looking into it."

He, however, ruled out the possibility of storming the

said island due to the difficult nature of the terrain. The commissioner also said that he was not aware that any ransom demand had been made by the kidnappers.

A dredger, Mr. Augustine

Joint military patrol to be restored soon –Fashola

Lagos State Governor, Mr. Babatunde Fashola (SAN), on Friday said a rejuvenated joint military security patrol of the metropolis in the state would soon be restored.

A statement issued by Fashola's Senior Special Assistant (Media), Mr. Hakeem Bello, said Fashola, who spoke during a chat with newsmen in Abuja, stated that arrangements had been put in place for the restoration of the patrol, which had contributed to keeping criminals at bay in the state.

The governor said there was no going back on the commitment of his administration to the safety of lives and property of every resident of Lagos and ensuring that criminals have no hid-

Nnaemeka, claimed that on many occasions, the suspects had come to harass workers and demanded for money. He alleged that women had sometimes fallen victim and only secured their freedom after they had been abused.

ing place in the state. Fashola also stated that his administration would release a White Paper on the reports of the security committee headed by the former Inspector-General of Police, Mr. Musiliua Smith.

He added that he would be proactive in solving the problem of flooding in the state by ensuring the institution of a programme that would ensure that Lagos has no settlements without drainages. Fashola reiterated that as part of the efforts to deflood Lagos, efforts would be intensified to remove all obstructions to drainages in areas like Old Yaba road, Murtala Mohammed Way, Apapa, and create drainage channels for an area like Ikoyi, which cannot boast of a single drainage channel.