

THE PUNCH

Robbers invade Canaanland

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EIGHT people, including two policemen, were killed in three violent incidents in Ogun and Lagos states on Thursday.

The attacks began around mid-day when about 27 armed robbers violated the sanctity of Canaanland in Sango, Ogun State, by raiding four banks there.

Before the robbers left with huge amounts of money from the banks, two policemen lay dead. Two bank officials were seriously injured but one was said to have died around 5pm at the Covenant University Health Centre.

One banker was lucky during the attack. Bullet reportedly pierced through one of his shoes and came out at the other side.

Canaanland accommodates the Covenant University, Faith Academy, Kingdom Heritage Schools and the Living Faith Church, otherwise known as Winners Chapel, among others.

The banks involved in the raid are Oceanic Bank Plc, United Bank for Africa, Spring Bank Plc and Covenant Micro-Finance Bank.

Our correspondents gathered that the robbers divided themselves into four groups and struck at the same time at the four banks.

An eyewitness said the robbers, who drove into the Christian community in three vehicles, virtually emptied the banks' vaults.

The witness claimed that the bandits were provoked into killing the policemen and the bank official following resistance at the UBA branch.

Another witness said people who saw the men could not believe they were armed robbers because they dressed like gentlemen.

"I was actually about to enter one of the banks when I suddenly heard gunshots. I was too afraid to move, it was my brother-in-law who was with me that dragged me away from the scene," she said.

When our correspondent visited the scene on Thursday afternoon, bullet holes were seen on the UBA's building.

Besides, the beret and shoes of one of the slain policemen were seen on the floor within the bank's premises. There were also bloodstains on the floor and walls.

But just as the news of the attack on Canaanland

spread, policemen shot dead three people in Ijaiye-Ojokoro on the Lagos - Abeokuta Expressway.

The three men who were riding in a Mazda 323 car were said to have refused to yield to the demand for gratification by the law enforcement officers attached to the Ijaiye-Ojokoro Police Station.

A source said that the policemen pursued the vehicle and shot at the occupants when the car slowed down because of a bump at Car-Wash bus stop.

Angry residents of the area then took to the street and marched towards the police station, causing mayhem.

It was gathered that the residents chased out policemen from the station

before setting it on fire.

However, the timely reinforcement of policemen from the Area 'G' Command, Ogba, saved the station from complete destruction.

When contacted, the Commissioner of Police, Ogun State Command, Mr. Joseph Apapa, said he was yet to receive details of the Canaanland incident.

Apapa said, "You know Canaanland is a private estate. I am yet to be briefed on the incident. I just came back from Abuja. We don't have anything to hide, as soon as I get the facts if you call me back, I will give you everything. However, you can call the PPRO."

But the Command's Public Relations Officer, Mr. Femi Awoyale, who

confirmed the incident, claimed that the bandits only struck at Oceanic Bank.

He said, "You are aware that Canaanland is a private property. When the robbers came, our men were alerted and they fought them gallantly, although we lost two men."

Also, at the Trade Fair International Complex on the Lagos-Badagry Expressway, two people were feared killed in a clash between rival factions of the Auto-Spare Parts and Machinery Dealers Association.

Trouble was said to have started when a former president of ASPAMDA, identified as Chief Okeh, stormed the market with riot policemen in a bid to force out the incumbent president, simply identified as Adidax.

Our correspondents gathered that Okeh lost his bid for a second term in 2007 but headed for the court, claiming that the election was rigged.

It was learnt that he came back to the complex on Thursday with a court injunction showing that he had been declared winner.

A source said that fracas broke out when Okeh attempted to move into the ASPAMDA office. Two people were feared dead and many injured in the process.

The Acting PPRO, Lagos State Police Command, Mr. Olumide Jimoh, said policemen had taken charge of the Ijaiye-Ojokoro and the Trade Fair incidents.

He claimed that the driver of the Mazda car at Ijaiye was driving recklessly,

thereby arousing police curiosity.

At about the same time, our correspondents learnt that another gang of armed robbers attacked a bank at Mushin, Lagos.

It was not clear as at press time, however, whether the robbers succeeded in getting to the bank's vault.

But Jimoh said he was not aware of any bank robbery in Mushin.

In a related development, one policeman was feared killed at Aguda, Surulere, Lagos area of Lagos State on Wednesday night when a gang of bandits allegedly ambushed a police van.

The van, marked NPF 9542 B, was sighted at the premises of the Aguda Police Station on Thursday, riddled with bullets.

Iwu's answers have destroyed

Atiku's petition – Yar'Adua

• Sagay, others seek INEC chief's prosecution

Seth Akintoye, Tobi
Sophia Festus Akanbi
and Oluwaseun Adeniyi

PRESIDENT Umaru Yar'Adua and Vice-President Goodluck Jonathan on Thursday argued that the responses of the Independent National Electoral Commission Chairman, Prof. Maurice Iwu, to the 27 questions by Alhaji Atiku Abubakar on the April 21, 2007 poll had nailed his petition at the Presidential Election Petition Tribunal.

They said in a written address submitted on their behalf by Chief Wole Olanipekun (SAN), that the answers provided by Iwu had strengthened their case and weakened that of Abubakar.

Findings by THE PUNCH on Wednesday, however, indicated that Iwu was not truthful in his responses to some of the questions posed by Abubakar, who contested the presidential election on the platform of the Action Congress.

Iwu had on pages 30 and 31 of the Official Report of the Election which he presented in October 2007 said that additional ballot papers for the poll were printed in South Africa.

In his response to the former vice-president's question, he said that INEC did not award any contract to any company in South Africa to produce ballot papers.

But Yar'Adua and

Jonathan said that since INEC awarded all the contracts for the printing of ballot papers for the poll to Nigerian Security Printing and Minting Company, the questions on whether same was awarded to a South African Company did not arise.

They said that questions 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 9 and 10 are based on the wrong assumption by the former vice-president and his running mate in the poll, Senator Ben Obi, that the contract was awarded to a South African company.

The President and the vice-president added that since it had been clearly stated in the answer to question one that it was the NSMC that handled all contracts for the co-ordination and printing of the ballot papers, questions 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 9 and 10 were totally irrelevant.

Yar'Adua and Jonathan said that since Iwu had shown in his answers that Abubakar's name was displayed as one of the presidential candidates, he could no longer sustain the allegation that he was excluded from the election.

They said, "The answers to questions 17, 18, 19 and 20 clearly show that the 1st petitioner's (Abubakar) name was published by INEC as one of the candidates

contesting the election and the public was adequately informed."

"These answers deal deadly blow to the unsubstantiated claim by the 1st petitioner that he was excluded from the election."

"On his own request, a list showing his name among other candidates who contested the presidential election has now been attached. He cannot be heard again to assert anything to the contrary."

The President and his deputy stated that Abubakar should not be allowed to attack or dispute the questions elicited by him on oath through his interrogatories.

Yar'Adua and Jonathan said, "They (the former vice-president and Obi) had chosen to doggedly and strangely request interrogatories and since the answers have become part of the record and, indeed, their evidence, they can not shy away from them."

"It is granted that a defendant is a competent and compellable witness for the plaintiff and vice versa. Howbeit, any party who chooses or gambles to call his opponent or adversary as a witness would also have to inherit the advantages or even liabilities of the evidence of such witness."

"Put succinctly and within

the precincts of this case, the answers submitted through the interrogatories on oath constitute an admission against the interest of the petitioners and such an admission is binding on them."

Meanwhile, some prominent lawyers – Prof. Itse Sagay (SAN), Mr. Fred Agbaje, Mr. Barnidele Aturu and Mr. Wale Ogunade – have called for the prosecution of Iwu, for his inconsistent statements on the printing of the ballot papers.

The lawyers told our correspondents in Lagos on Thursday that it was a criminal offence for one to lie on oath.

In Sagay's view, since Iwu had committed contempt of court, he deserved to be punished.

The professor of law said the onus lay on the counsel on Abubakar's lawyers to call the attention of the court to the perjury so that the right step could be taken.

Agbaje, in his own comment, said that the INEC boss ought to be arrested, prosecuted and sent to jail for perjury.

He said, "It pains me that Iwu is still at the helms of affairs of the commission. He is supposed to have been kicked out especially with the verdicts returned by some election petition tribunals that

have concluded sittings.

"When a person like him could be lying under oath, what do you expect from the elections he conducted? That was why he made a mockery of our electoral process. An INEC chairman is supposed to be impartial."

"Perjury is an offence under the Criminal Code as well as the Penal Code and he should be given the maximum penalty."

Ogunade, who is the President of the Voters Awareness Initiative, said with the inconsistency, Iwu had added another dimension to his disservice to the nation.

He said, "Before now, Iwu had been playing on Nigerians' intelligence. Now he has started desecrating our laws. Nobody is above the law. This is a case of perjury and he should be prosecuted to serve as a deterrent to others."

"Iwu has been telling lies and misleading the people. Tribunals' verdicts have vindicated people like us who have been saying that the elections were far from being free and fair. We know he is playing out a script."

Aturu, who preferred to comment generally on perjury, said "Nobody is allowed to lie under oath. It is criminal and immoral to lie under oath. Perjury can lead to the miscarriage of justice, so, it attracts imprisonment."