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21 policemen killed, 54 persons kidnapped in Anambra – Police

By Emmanuel Obe, Published: Thursday, 6 May 2010

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The Anambra State Commissioner of Police, Mr. Philemon Leha, on Wednesday said armed robbers have killed more than 21 policemen and injured seven others this year alone in the state.

Leha, who spoke to reporters in Awka also disclosed that no fewer than 54 people have been kidnapped in the state within the same period.

The police commissioner added that 74 suspected armed robbery suspects were equally arrested while four of them were killed between January and May 3 this year.

He said no fewer than 20 suspected kidnappers were also arrested, while 3,266 different types of ammunition were recovered from them.

He said some of the suspects have already been charged to court.

Leha said the command would have to do something to stem the increasing cases of armed robbery and kidnapping in the state.

He recalled that the command lost four policemen at Oraifite in Ekwusigbo Local Government Area on Monday to armed robbers.

He said after shooting the policemen, the robbers mutilated their bodies with machetes.

"They fired at the tyres of the vehicle in which the police men were patrolling and when the vehicle fell into the gutter, they went there and shot them. Not satisfied, they used machete to slice them before zooming off in their own vehicle," he said, lamenting that the police were not well-equipped to fight violent crime in the state.

He said, "The problem we have is that these robbers and kidnappers have feeder roads they use for their escape and we need at least 100 policemen to block these routes.

"For us to do that in this state the number of police personnel has to triple and there has to be communication among the various checkpoints which is presently lacking.

"At present, we have only 7,000 police personnel in the state to fight crime in a state with a population of about five million people.

"Besides, the police lack the necessary Integrated Communication System to be able to communicate all the divisional police formations in the state and we require about 100 vehicles for effective patrol.

"For now, we can only communicate with Onitsha from Awka, while we can only communicate with Nnewi through Onitsha. This is totally unacceptable if the crime rate must reduce," he said.

The police commissioner explained that 90 percent of kidnappings in the state had insider knowledge and participation, adding that it was for that reason that the problem had continued despite efforts by the police to curb it.

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