

Robbers kill cops guarding hotel

Comfort Oseghale

THREE yet-to-be identified policemen lost their lives when a group of armed men attacked a hotel at Araromi bus stop along the Igando-Iba Highway.

The policemen, attached to the Igando Police Division, were reportedly taken by surprise, when the robbers stormed the hotel about 2am, on Saturday, September 21.

Sources at Taiwo Alonge Street, where the hotel is situated, told *PUNCH Metro* that residents were interrupted from their sleep by the sound of gunfire in the middle of the night.

She said, "The hotel is a busy one. Last Friday, the situation was not different. Business went on till late into the night.

"Since this hotel began operating, there have always been at least three policemen guarding the place at night. Although the hotel has its own security, the policemen supervised them."

PUNCH Metro gathered that the robbers, numbering about 10, had initially driven up to the hotel under the guise of being guests.

However, upon sighting the policemen who were manning the gate, the robbers were said to have immediately opened fire, killing them instantly.

The source said, "This is a residential community, so at that time of the night, most people were already asleep. The hotel was just about the only business around still open to customers. It was the sound of gunshots that woke me up.

"The gunfire went on for some time. We were all scared, nobody could say for sure who was being attacked. It was the following morning that we

realised that it was the hotel that the robbers had visited."

After killing the policemen, the robbers were said to have condoned off the hotel and robbed its occupants of their valuables. The operation was said to have lasted for about 30 minutes.

It was said that no help came from any quarter as the neighbourhood security men were said to be unarmed and the Igando Police Station was some distance away.

Residents of Taiwo Alonge who dared to come out of their homes as soon as the day broke on Saturday, were said to have been greeted by the sight of the three dead policemen lying on the street. The hotel guests were said to have hurriedly checked out.

As news of the attack went from street to street, a huge crowd thronged the scene.

The source said, "From what I gathered, the robbers simply opened fire on the policemen because they were policemen; you know robbers don't like them. After killing the policemen, they didn't shoot anyone else. They only robbed everyone in the hotel and left. No house in this community was attacked.

"In the morning, we all gathered in groups discussing the incident until a team of policemen came and took the dead the corpses away. Since then, we have not seen any policeman come to the hotel."

The Lagos State Police Deputy Public Relations Officer, ASP Damasus Ozoani, said, "There was actually a robbery at a hotel in the area, but the policemen who were killed were not there to offer private security.

"They were responding to a distress call. Unfortunately, the robbers had laid ambush

for them. In the exchange of gunfire that followed, one policeman was killed and another was wounded. One of the robbers was also killed.

Investigation is ongoing to apprehend the fleeing robbers as some items were recovered from their deceased colleague."

Navy hands over 61 oil thieves to police

Simon Utebor, Yenagoa

THE Nigerian Navy in Bayelsa State has handed over 61 suspected oil thieves to the state police command.

The suspected thieves had among them a Ghanaian and a Cameroonian.

The authorities on Monday evening also handed over a suspect, Abantuwe Potter, allegedly involved in the illegal possession of firearms and protection of illegal refineries in Southern Ijaw Local Government Area of the state.

Flag Officer Commanding, Central Naval Command, Rear Admiral Sidi-Ali Usman, while handing over the suspects to the state Police Commissioner, represented by an Assistant Superintendent of Police, Chris Nwaogu, said the seven vessels impounded by the navy in the state's waterways would remain in its custody until the matter was concluded in court.

Usman, represented by the Command Operations Officer, Commodore Emmanuel Enemor, said the seized vessels were MT Wharf Dale; MV Henty; MV Tobiloba; MT Emmanuel; MT Pauline; MV S & T Victoria (tug) and a large wooden boat (Cotonou).

The FOC said they were arrested between July and September 2013 by the patrol team of the Forward Operating Base, at Egweama Brass, at various locations with stolen crude.

Usman said, "MT WHARF DALE's vessel with an all Nigerian crew of six, was arrested on July 6 for dubious intent to load stolen crude oil. All the crew members of MT WHARF DALE, including the captain, had no identification cards at the time of the arrest. The vessel had no ship log, thereby making it difficult for her voyage itinerary to be properly established.

"MT WHARF DALE was engaged in oil transport without flag, registration, call-sign and International Maritime Organisation's number, thereby constituting gross violations of international shipping regulations."

The naval boss also said MV HENTY, which had a crew of five Nigerians and one Ghanaian, was arrested on July 25 for alleged illegal conversion from fishing trawler to a bunkering vessel with 132,000 litres of illegally refined AGO.

He added, "MT Pauline was arrested with a 10-man crew of nine Nigerians and a Cameroonian on September 6, off Nun river for being loaded with 360,000 litres of illegally refined AGO without relevant documents for the voyage as well as the products on board.

"As for MV Tobiloba, the vessel was arrested with all Nigerian crew of seven on August 24 at Akassa as the vessel was loaded with 100,000 litres of illegal refined AGO."