

Two killed as police, kidnappers clash in Lagos forest

Deji Lambo 1 October 2021

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Two yet-to-be-identified hoodlums have been shot dead during a gun battle between Lagos policemen and suspected kidnappers in a forest at Imota-Emuren, in the Ikorodu area of the state.

The state Commissioner of Police, Hakeem Odumosu, said one of the suspects, Peter Thomas, 25, was arrested, adding that the forest was notorious for keeping kidnap victims and collecting ransoms.

Odumosu disclosed this on Thursday during a press briefing at the command headquarters at Ikeja.

He noted that the hoodlums once kidnapped a businessman, Lukman Onabanjo, aka Bugon.

PUNCH Metro had reported that Onabanjo was about to drive into his farm when the kidnappers opened fire, whisked him away and demanded N200m for his release.

Onabanjo had since been reunited with his family.

While parading the suspect at the command headquarters, the police boss said the police invaded the hideout around 11.50pm on Wednesday, September 29, 2021, after days of intelligence monitoring of the gang.

He said, "In a highly coordinated operation which lasted hours, operatives of the command's tactical teams, in collaboration with the Imota Police Division, busted the armed gang in its criminal hideout located in the heart of the deep forest.

"The recent kidnapping incidents in the state further invigorated the determination of the command not to allow the criminals to turn the state into a theatre of kidnapping. On sighting the police operatives, the dare-devil kidnappers engaged them in a shootout that lasted for some hours.

"In a determined spirit, the operatives returned the heavy fire. In the ensuing gun battle, two of the suspected armed kidnappers were fatally injured and later gave up the ghost while being conveyed to a hospital for medical attention.

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"One was arrested alive. Other members of the gang escaped with bullet wounds. Manhunt and security onslaught have been emplaced for their arrest. The suspect arrested is identified as Peter Thomas, 25, of no fixed address."

Odumosu stated that exhibits recovered from the gang included two AK-47 rifles, three AK-47 magazines with 46 live ammunition, a dagger, N10, 000, one iTel phone, and one SIM card.

While fielding questions from journalists on the ongoing rescue of Air Vice Marshal Sikiru Smith (retd.), who was abducted in the Ajah area of Lagos State, Odumosu said some suspects had been arrested.

He said, "Investigation is still ongoing; in the parlance of security investigation, there is information that you give out that will jeopardise the investigation because it is possible that those who are holding him in custody will be monitoring what is being circulated.

"We want to assure members of the public that no stone will be left unturned to ensure that we rescue him. It is better you allow 1000 criminals to escape justice than to allow one innocent life to be lost.

"Regarding the voice note you are talking about (recorded by the victim's driver to raise the alarm on the abduction), investigation is on; some suspects are in our custody on that, but that is the most I can tell you about that because his life is more important than any other thing."

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