

## Cover Story

headquarters of Itesiwaju local council. Natives expressed the belief that the police was in the know of the robbery since the force had maintained a non-committal stance, in the face of high-level criminality. "Look at my fingers. One of them was chopped off when robbers came to our bank and policemen around simply fled," Ojuolape lamented to the magazine. Above all, the people of Itesiwaju council along the Shaki-Owode-Iseyin border area are besieged by frequent robbery acts amid allegations that the police patrol teams were regular accomplices.

But why would a man in uniform, who is supposed to be a role model, opt to engage in criminal acts? Nwagbo Eze, a professor and head of the Department of



**Tijani:  
Miffed**

Psychology, University of Lagos, UNILAG, sees the problem as one of ebbing moral values nurtured by Nigeria's poor economic condition. "The truth is that, when a society is bad, then the police in it will also be bad. Personally, I have sympathy for the policeman. He is into anything to make money, including selling his arms to survive. If senators are involved in bribery scams, what then do you expect from a society where 70 per cent of its population is living below the poverty line?" the don asks rhetorically. He adds that since survival is the first order of nature, a poorly treated policeman is perpetually under pressure, to yield to dangerous temptations.

Also, a superintendent of police, SP,

# 'No Police Robber Will Be Spared'

— *Edgar Nanakurjo, commissioner of police, Kaduna State*

By **TAJUDEEN SULEIMAN** and **HARUNA SALAMI**

**M**any criminals in uniform have been arrested by the police themselves and paraded on national TV. Why is this trend on the rise and what are you doing to control it?

There are two sides to this issue. The first is that people who are not policemen wear police uniforms. When we go on raids or get report of armed robbery taking place, patrol teams are dispatched to the scene to arrest them. When people are arrested, sometimes, they are seen in police uniforms or even in military uniforms. On investigation, you discover that they are not policemen or don't belong to the military. That means they have access to the uniforms. It's unfortunate that the black and black police uniform (is stigmatised). In the night, any colour close to black goes for police uniform. And they have easy access to it. The source of the uniform will also have to be addressed. The force is trying to do that by way of getting a unique texture for the police uniform so that, perhaps, we will be able to differentiate between the real police uniform and just any 'black and black' that is being worn. The other side of it, the side I think you are interested in, concerns policemen involved in violent crimes. Yes, like you stated, it has been so recorded, but the question is, 'what are we doing?' The force has put in place a lot of measures to ensure that those involved in crime are shown the way out. In this command, we have tried a number of policemen involved in all sorts of misconducts, not just cases of armed robbery alone but bribery, rape and so on. Once they are arrested, they are investigated, tried and dismissed. We have a very good internal cleansing system, I must tell you. For those who are outside, it would appear as if nothing is being done, but when you get the statistics, you will be surprised to hear that a lot of them are being dismissed on a daily basis throughout the country.

**In this command, what is the number of policemen who have been so tried, let's say, in the last one year?**

I cannot account for the last one year because I have been here for only six months. But you can get the statistics from the

state CID. Once a policeman is involved from anywhere, he is brought to the state CID; he is investigated and tried in orderly room. So, two places that you can get the statistics are the state CID and the Provost's Office. They are tried in the Provost's Office. I cannot tell you categorically, but I know one or two cases that attracted some questions here and there. I think that we can easily get... but if you want to take a full statistics, we may need to go to the office of the provost or state CID to know exactly how many policemen, from January to this time, have been involved in such crimes.

**The two recent cases that attracted questions, which you say we can lay hands on, what exactly were they? We learnt that some military men were involved, arrested and handed over to you.**

In the first case, six of them were arrested by the military. They were dismissed and handed over to the police for prosecution. As at now, they have been arraigned before the court and remanded in prison custody. But that of the... I cannot even remember his name now, but I know there was a corporal who was also involved in armed robbery. He was arrested and has been dismissed and also taken to court. It's a very bad development, which the force generally is trying to wipe out.

**Why is it so easy to get a police uniform?**

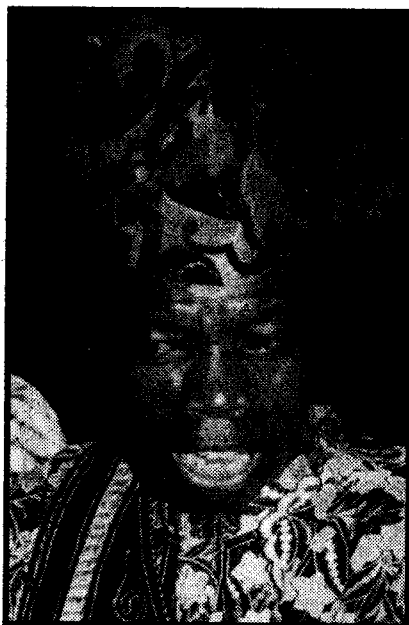
They go to the open market. It's not from the store. Definitely, "the black" is not from the store. They go to the open market and sew any black and black; any black and black will do in the night. So, it's not from police store at all! Definitely not. It's just that, even if we get a unique texture, in the night, once they see a black and black, it goes for a policeman. So, when they confront the public, they get away with it. People will say, "Oh, it's a policeman," so they may stop for checks only to find out that armed robbers confront them. Definitely, it's not from our stores.

**In the past, confirmed armed robbers who are even wanted by the police were recruited into the police force.**

That is about recruitment policy and I don't want to talk about policy matters. But there are possibilities.

## Cover Story

who has spent upwards of 30 years in the service, spoke with the magazine on the police palaver. The officer, who preferred anonymity, said proliferation of criminals in police uniform should be blamed largely on the porosity in the manner of recruitment into the force. "So many precautionary measures aimed at testing the competence, composure and character of the would-be policeman have been neglected," he noted. For instance, he said in the 1970s, the authorities would ascertain the background of the recruit, which included his family history and possible criminal record. Furthermore, the recruits of those days were made to undergo various tests for physical fitness and their fingerprints taken. All the results would be ready before they pass out of training. So if the new recruit turns out to be a criminal, he is quickly given the boot. "Prospective male recruits were even tested to ascertain whether they are impotent or not. They would be stripped naked and attractive policewomen would pull their sexual organs. This is to ensure that they are such that would not become aggressive whenever they give some thought to their condition. But, today, nobody cares about all these things. They are only concerned with recruiting more policemen", the officer pointed out. Also, he took a swipe at what he called 'common' identity cards and uniform, purchasable at Oshodi market in Lagos, now being produced for the police. In the days of yore, this, he said, was not possible. "Police uniform in the 70's was customised. It was being produced by Marble Fairs, a company in Great Britain. So, no miscreant could come by it", he remembered. Innocent Chukwuma, executive director of Centre for Law Enforcement, CLEEN Foundation, nods at this police officer's views. He only adds that the bad situation is made worse by the target figure set for police recruitment. "There is the move to recruit 60,000 policemen every five years. Because of the multitude of those to be recruited, the screening (process) has not been thorough. Thereby, a lot of unscrupulous elements find their way into the force", he observed.



**Olowoporoku:** Accuses politicians of encouraging police criminality

**R**eacting too, Princewill Akpakpan, a lawyer and head of the penal code project of the Civil Liberties Organisation, CLO, said there was the need to make police and military personnel realise that they are as liable under the Criminal Act as the civilian outside the barracks. "They



**Tinubu:** Advocates state-controlled police

must understand that, when a policeman cocks his gun at the checkpoint to collect N20 or N50 bribe, he has committed armed robbery". Nonetheless, relenting from the seeming hard-line dimension of his submission, Akpakpan owned up that the condition of service in the police is appalling. Many of those in the rank and file, he said, collect monthly salary barely enough to feed a local dog, much less an Alsatian. "Most of them don't live in the barracks and, as such, the cost of transportation takes the better part of their salary. No social scheme for them, they buy their uniform with their money and they use their money to buy fuel for the police patrol vans. So, where do they think they have been getting money to survive these odds?" an

agitated Akpakpan asked.

But more agitated on the po criminality is Bode Olowoporoku, senator representing Ekiti State. He underscored another dimension to the problem, asking "what about policemen that carry ballot boxes to rig an election?" He pointed to the conduct of a recent bye-election

in his home state as an instance where politicians hired the police to steal the people's mandate. He believes that the police hierarchy in the country has been helpless since it defers to the federal government.

Olowoporoku has, by that, struck a chord in the growing agitation among some Nigerians for a reformed police system. Oftentimes, Bode Tinubu, the Lagos State governor, has urged for legislation in favour of state police to ensure close monitoring of the cops and then check excesses currently being witnessed.

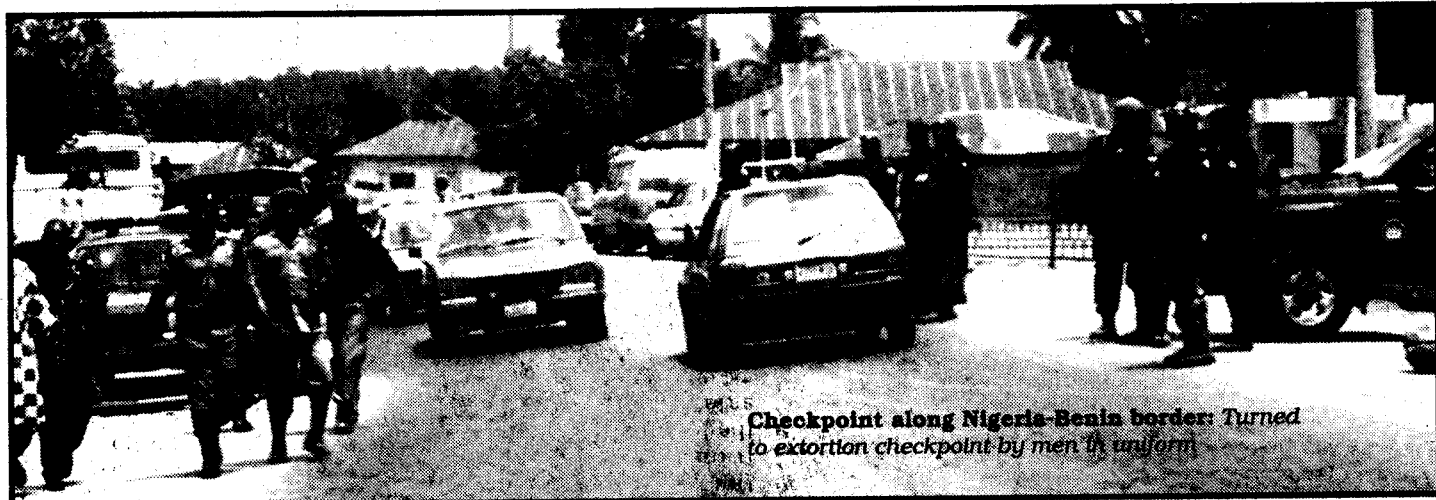
Concerning military involvement in crime, a retired military officer who spoke to the magazine in confidence attributed the problem partly to idleness as many of the soldiers are now in want of what to do. He advised the government to engage them in professional training and craftsmanship whenever they are engaged in combat. He particularly cited those who returned from peacekeeping efforts outside the country

saying that not all of them have submitted all of their arms. He, therefore, suggested that other security arms outside the military should supervise disarmament of them. "Or else, these weapons, could be made available to hoodlums, for a fee," he cautioned. He similarly recommended proper disarmament for both dismissed police and military personnel.

But are all these criminals in uniform genuinely from the armed forces? Ednanah Nanahumo, Kaduna State police commissioner, does not think so. "It is unfortunate that the black and black uniform is stigmatised. At night, anyone wearing black and black is a policeman. They have easy access to it," he said. Adebayo agrees with him. He said impostors are also giving the police a bad name. Perhaps, they are right.

On June 9, 2006, two Peugeot 4-door saloon cars had galloped into Ebute, a market on the Lagos Island painted in police colours. Inside it were armed robbers. Numbering 10, including a teenage girl, some of the heavily armed hoodlums who jumped out of the cars, donned mobile police uniforms while the others were clad in army camouflage. In no time, they had bordened off the bureau de change wing of the market, reported

## Cover Story



Checkpoint along Nigeria-Benin border: Turned to extortion checkpoint by men in uniform

in search of a businessman who came to exchange some foreign currencies valued at millions of naira. They shot indiscriminately, killing innocent souls, most of whom were women who came shopping. A.O. Balogun, medical director of the Lagos Island General Hospital, confirmed six persons dead a few hours after the hail of bullets.

While many Nigerians are worried over insecurity in the streets owing to the exploits of those in uniform, they are also perplexed at the peril thrown up by the spectre of security men mounting roadblocks. In the last one year, Sunday Ehindero, inspector-general of police, IG, has said without let that there are no more roadblocks as they have been dismantled. But the magazine's investigations revealed that the IG's men are still stationed at public highways, doing "business as usual". For instance, there are well over 22 checkpoints between Enugu and Onitsha, a mere 90-minute drive. Also, between Shagamu in Ogun State and Ore in Ondo State, motorists could count no fewer than 20 roadblocks. A commercial driver, making a pun of the situation, recalled that mobile policemen on the Shagamu-Ore road gave him a Christmas card during the last Yuletide "for my daily contribution of N20 to national growth!" He may have been contributing only N20 but investigations showed that the amount is the least in the order of such bribery. Mobile policemen or those in the Federal Highway Patrol Squad, it was gathered, would not settle for less than N100. Again, soldiers detailed to assist policemen at roadblocks and men of the Federal Road Safety Commission, FRSC, as well as operatives of the Nigeria Customs Service are all said to be comrades in checkpoint extortion. At the customs checkpoint on the Agbara-Mile 2 Expressway in Lagos, for instance, gun-wielding customs men there are reportedly in the habit of

extorting money from motorists.

Many policemen who spoke with TELL on condition of anonymity sneered at the IG's resolve to stamp out corruption by dismantling the checkpoints. "Dem no fit do am. Not even 10,000 fit dismantle roadblocks. Truly, dem cancel roadblock with mouthtalk but dem permit us to do stop and search in case of criminals. So, we fit tinda for any place on the road and do stop and search, now!" a corporal in Lagos, speaking in pidgin English, explained. The corporal further alleged that bribery at checkpoints is similar to internally generated revenue, IGR, of a state government. "From it, dem ogas go buy fuel, stationery, other office needs and share the rest. All na from our returns during stop and search," he disclosed.

**F**estering acts of criminality among the men in uniform that now provoke public outcry are, however, evocative of similar events in recent past. In 1986, when the end came for Lawrence Anini or Anini The Law, then Bendel State robbery kingpin, shocking revelations emerged of how George Iyamu, a deputy superintendent of police, DSP, was hiring out police weapons to the gang. Iyamu, Anini and his dexterous deputy-in-crime, Sunday Osunbor, and other members of the gang were eventually sentenced to death and publicly executed. Also, in April 2001, Benjamin Oyakhire, Jimoh Michael and Gershon Shaba, three policemen attached to the Kogi State Police Command, had flagged down a bus conveying seven traders who were on a trip to buy rams ahead of a Sallah festivity. But, on discovering that the traders had with them a sum of N1.6 million, the egregious cops promptly drove them to an isolated place, shot them, put them in their vehicle and set both humans and vehicle ablaze. This was after they had helped themselves to

the traders' money. But two of the traders managed to escape and the cat was eventually let out of the bag. In the long run, the killer cops were tried and sentenced to the gallows.

That was then. It would now appear that public confidence in the country's law enforcement agencies is being eroded owing to prevailing belief that the armed forces usually 'protect their own'. Ifedayo Daramola, a social analyst, describes this trend as "the flight of justice". Daramola points at the June 9, 2005 killing of six Igbo traders in Apo, Abuja, asking: "What has become of that case?" But Nanahumo urges Nigerians not to lose confidence in the police, as the force would always ensure that its members are not shielded from justice. He recalled that, recently, in Kaduna State, six military personnel fingered in different robbery cases, were apprehended, and are still cooling their heels in prison custody. Also, a police corporal in the state who was caught in action a few weeks ago was summarily dismissed and is now being prosecuted.

Summing the nation's mood over this inglorious drift in police service, a visibly angry Ehindero, while speaking recently at a security meeting held with deputy inspector-general of police, assistant inspectors-general and commissioners of police in Abuja, drew the baseline. He warned that henceforth, he would hold the various command heads responsible for crime committed by men and officers under their supervision. How far his riot act can help in the rebirth of the Nigeria Police, against its tall stature among corrupt uniformed outfits, remains to be seen.

Additional reports by  
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