

Robbery: A fulfilment of a devious warning

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the tyres of the Bullion van but the driver was able to escape with the van. They could not give chase to the van as the driver was driving towards a Military checkpoint ahead. The CP said the two injured Policemen have been taken to hospital for treatment while the deceased have been deposited at the mortuary.

How the armed robbers operated—eyewitness

An eye witness who gave his name simply as, Barr. Aleke, the robbers came with 3 cars, killed the policemen and took away their rifles and escaped. He said: "It was at 3:58 pm, a Highlander Jeep parked near Watchman Charismatic along Enugu/Abakaliki Expressway between Ezzamgbo junction and Nkwo bridge. "When the Bullion Van was approaching, the Jeep that was parked beside the road wanted to enter the road in an open attempt to block the police escort, the police charged at the Jeep; all thought that the driver was drunk."

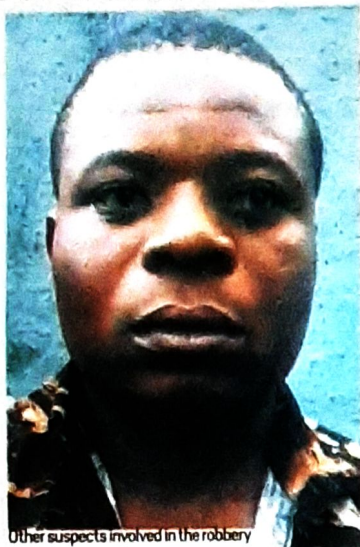
"Immediately the Bullion Van wanted to pass, the Jeep repeated the attempt, but could not succeed. "The other two cars, a Lexus car and one other car were parked at Emmanuel Onwe's Filling Station at the beginning of the flyover at Ezzamgbo junction. On sighting the police escort and the van, the armed robbers opened fire at the police, the police expectedly reacted but it shocked everyone that the robbers were armed with charms that bewildered the police."

"The criminals targeted the heads of the police men and killed four; carted away three rifles, one police officer who was hit by a stray bullet, collected the rifle of one of the fallen officer and ran inside Eke Ezzamgbo Market/ Motor Park. "With trail of blood, he later got weak as a result of loss of blood and strength following the gunshot wound."

"Also, during the shootout, one Chinedu from Ezza who was a welder was shot dead by the hoodlums making it five, as many ran for their lives. "In the cause of the gun battle, one other boy from Ndiegu Onwe Ntsurakpa Ezzamgbo was also shot on his waist and was later rushed to the Federal Medical Centre (FMC), Abakaliki. "After about 10 minutes of the tragic event, a team of Police Patrol arrived the scene, but then the armed robbers had left through Umuebe Ezzamgbo road".

The robbers won't go unpunished—Umahi

Meanwhile, Governor Dave Umahi has vowed that the armed robbers will not go unpunished. The Governor who commiserated with the state police command over the killing of the policemen, described it as



Other suspects involved in the robbery



a colossal loss. "It is with great sadness that I received the news of the death of our dear servicemen who died yesterday while serving our dear country, escorting bullion van from Enugu to Ebonyi. The loss is a big blow on our corporate existence which the culprits will never go unpunished."

"I heartily commiserate with the family of the deceased police officers and the Nigeria police in general, praying that God grants them the fortitude to bear this colossal loss."

"Let me also assure the public that the Ebonyi State Police Headquarters is already giving all efforts, harnessing all available intelligence to bringing the culprits to book as they have tightened the boundaries against the entrance of hoodlums", he said.

Army disown 'soldiers'

The Nigerian Army has however, denied that the purported soldiers arrested for the bullion van robbery are not its personnel. Col. Aliyu Yusuf, Deputy Director, Army Public Relations in 82 Division of the Nigerian Army said so in a statement made available to journalists in Enugu.

Yusuf, in the statement titled: "Re: Police Nab Soldiers, others for bullion van robbery", noted that the two alleged soldiers are not serving in any of the Nigerian Army's units, commands, formations or divisions. "The attention of Headquarters 82 Division Nigerian Army has been drawn to on-line publication on the unfortunate Bullion Van Robbery incident at Abakaliki, Ebonyi State on July 29 which led to the arrest of two suspected dismissed soldiers and other gangsters involved in the act."

"It is necessary to inform the public that the so-called soldiers in the report are not personnel of the Nigerian Army since 2015 and 2018; when both Corporal Ayeni Samuel and Corporal Emeka Harrison were dismissed."

"Available record shows that Dismissed 03NA/53/088 Corporal Ayeni Samuel was dismissed in 2018 for desertion and pipeline vandalism at 174 Battalion."

"The dismissed soldier was attached to 174 Battalion from Command Day Secondary School, Ikaja for United Nations mission in the year 2013. Dismissed Corporal Ayeni deserted the Unit and was later arrested for pipeline vandalism at Ikorodu in Lagos State in 2018."

"In line with Nigerian Army extant rules and regulations, Ayeni was officially tried and awarded dismissed regiment as a Corporal and not Sergeant; as claimed in an online story."

"Also, dismissed Corporal Emeka Harrison was tried and dismissed regiment from 7 Division Garrison, Maiduguri since 2015," Yusuf said.

The drivers' testimony

They were only two in the ill-fated bullion van which was transferring money from Enugu to Abakaliki.

The drivers (names withheld for security), are said to be on contract with one of the New generational banks in Enugu. The newly contracted driver was behind the wheels while the other who was putting him through, sat on the passenger side. The drivers said the going was smooth until they arrived Ezzamgbo Junction. "The bandits were stationed

at the point where a flyover is currently being erected by the Ebonyi state government.

"Due to the work going on, only one-way was being used. The road is also bad at that point such that all vehicles are forced to slow down", they said. The drivers said it was like a movie as the guns went blazing. "The next thing we saw was the bodies of the police escorts in the police van that was leading the convoy dropping one after another on the road."

"My colleague urged me to be careful not to run over any of them in case any of them was still alive. I did exactly as he suggested and manoeuvred the bullion van through the bodies on the road."

"One of them shot at the van at close range but the bulletproof windscreen didn't give in. So they started shooting at the tyres. Luckily they missed the front tyres but got one of the back ones which deflated instantly."

"I had no choice but to continue without one tyre and was moving at 60km per hour. I didn't allow any vehicle to overtake me until I got to Abakaliki. A Lexus Jeep tried several times to overtake but I kept blocking the vehicle."

"We met three police checkpoints afterwards and I alerted them, but none of them agreed to my request for an escort to Abakaliki. They rather advised I parked at the check point that I was safe but I ignored them till I got to our destination. "It was like a journey to hell. We met death face-to-face but God delivered us."

He further explained that the robbers focused more on the police escorts. "Having gunned down those in the lead police van, they started shooting at the back up van at the rear. At the same time they tried to demolish the bullion van but I refused to stop. It was the Lord's doing and we give thanks to Him."

Commuters laud Life Lager over new lights on the Niger Bridge

Commuters moving in and out of the South-Eastern part of Nigeria have had more than just the freedom to travel again to cheer about, as Life Lager's lighting of the Niger Bridge has brought another cause for excitement.

Following the lift of the ban on interstate travel, Life Lager Beer embarked on a mission to welcome commuters back on the road with beautiful bright lights on the Niger Bridge.

The Niger Bridge, which represents a key part of the commercial history of southeast Nigeria has been an integral symbol for the Life Lager brand. The brand has used the bridge as a touch point to communicate with its numerous consumers, often branding it with faces of their ambassadors as well as billboards that share important reminders of what they stand for.

This time around, the beer brand is using its branding of the bridge as an opportunity to share a message of hope and self-preservation as the words "Enjoy Life Responsibly" can clearly be made out of the shining decorative. This initiative comes as a follow-up to an earlier campaign by the brand to encourage its consumers to stay strong and show solidarity with them as the world continues to fight the negative effects of the Coronavirus pandemic.

Omotunde Adenusi, Portfolio Manager Mainstream Brands, NB Plc., said that: "The Lighting up the Niger Bridge is symbolic to the brand's ideology of hope and progress."

Along with the new branding, Life Lager also released a new theme song featuring two of the South East's biggest music stars, Flavour and Phyno, who are also ambassadors of the brand. The theme song is expected to spread their message of hope even further to more of their consumers in the region.

First brewed in 1961 in Onitsha, Anambra State, Life Lager Beer has stayed true to its mantra of progress, transcending the status of a regional beer brand to become the biggest beer in the country. The brand remains well known for its rich taste and strong southeastern roots.

SISI EKO

- Aliu Egoje

