

Daily reports of armed robbery attack in several parts of the country, especially in Lagos and other metropolitan cities have once again call to question the ability of the Nigeria police to effectively combat crime. It is particularly worrisome reading and hearing of dastardly attacks from the men of the underworld, with each attack leaving a deadly trail of heavy human toll. The situation has indeed created a fog of insecurity across the land with adverse effect on business activities.

What is even more troubling is that in recent times these dare devil robbers now operate in broad day light. The slow response and sometimes no response at all from the police only help to thicken the air of insecurity and helplessness among the citizenry. Robbery victims who send distress calls to the Police are often left at the mercy of their assailants for so long, such that the Police either arrive too late, long after the robbers have leisurely left.

If the excuse by the Police in the past had been poor logistics support, the gesture of Governor Babatunde Fashola of Lagos State in donating 231 Toyota Hilux vehicles as well as several communication equipment is supposed to have changed the story line. The Fashola's gesture should not only bolster the capacity of the police, but also motivate them to greater service delivery. The Lagos State governor had only recently, earmarked N2.3 billion in equipping the Police with vehicles, communications gadgets and kits in the drive to rid Lagos of the menace of armed banditry. Even some banks and other corporate concerns have lent one form of support with view to re-enforcing the capacity of the police to combat the wave of armed robbery. The Police Equipment Foundation equally presented over 300 vehicles to the Police high command recently.

But even with these supports, inci-

Still, Robbers on Rampage

dence of robbery is on the upswing with renewed sophistication that seemed to outwit measures put in place by the Police to deny the robbers space to operate.

Penultimate week, robbers, in broad day light had attacked a bank in the Ketu area of Lagos resulting in the death of about twelve persons during a gun duel with the police. The same week, robbers raided motorists openly on a Sunday afternoon along the International Airport Road, just after another gang had raided residents of a popular estate, also in Lagos. Two days after, robbers struck again, this time at another bank in the Ikotun area of Lagos, after which a cold room was also robbed, where the security man on guard was killed. In other parts of the country, the sad tales are not any different.

In the face of the surge, we believe the challenge before the Police is to review it's operational strategy. The Force cannot afford to give up. And part of this may require increasing measures to mop up the small arms literally floating on the streets of most towns and cities.

The need to continually equip the police is an imperative in the crusade against armed banditry. The number of Policemen in the nation is still a far cry from the United Nations recommended ratio of one policeman to 400 citizens. If the Nigeria Police is to rise to the challenge of arresting the crime surge in the land, the Federal Government must seek ways to qualitatively increase the number of officers and men in the Force. No State worth its salt can allow criminals a free reign on the people with such impunity.

Besides, Government must now seriously address job creation as one sure way of fighting down the crime index of the nation. By creating the right ambience for businesses to thrive, government will be reducing the army of unemployed youths who are easy recruits of robbery syndicates.

Even then, policing the streets can be made easier if streets are well lit at night. With darkness even on major roads and streets, robbers find easy cover to launch their attacks.

Regular and incessant police patrols are sure ways of keeping the robbers at bay. The Police will also do well to increase surveillance on identified Black Spots, given that robbers often attack innocent persons in such areas.

Indeed, we believe that given the dire situation we face, joint patrols between the military and the Police have become inevitable. All said, the Police must rise to the occasion and protect lives and property, their *raison d'etre* of being in existence.



LEADERS & COMPANY LIMITED

Editor-in-Chief/Chairman: Nduka Obaigbena

Group Executive Directors:
Eniola Bello, Deji Mustapha

Divisional Directors:
Simon Kolawole, Emmanuel Efeni,
Israel Iwegbu, Gbenga Oni-Olusola, Benjie Ihenyen

Associate Directors:
Peter Iwegbu, Biodun Aminu, Gbayode Somuyiwa

General Managers:
Martins Egboh, Fidelis Elema

Deputy General Managers:
Ayo Oreségun, Labake Yembra, Patrick Eimiuihi

Assistant General Manager:
Dele Ogbodo

Group Heads:
Femi Tolufashe, Sola Obisesan, Morooph Alli, Peter Bakare, Ugo Nnakwe

Art Director: Obi Azuru

Office of the Chairman:
Chief of Staff: Ola Joshua

Director of Photography: Sunmi Smart-Cole, Contributing Editor: Funke Aboyade