

69 MASSOB members arrested

Continues from Page 1

ernment has set up a four-man panel of inquiry into the jail break in Onitsha during the violence. The arrests were effected during a raid at the Silas Works Street office of the suspects. They were subsequently taken to Awka.

Items recovered from the raided office included one AK-47 rifle, two Pump Action guns, two double-barrel short guns and assorted cartridges.

The police also recovered from Akpaka Forest, said to be another camp of the hoodlums, who claimed to be MASSOB members, an un-detonated 75 mm Military Rocket Bomb and an exploded Improvised Explosive Device (IED).

Briefing journalists at the Onitsha Police Area Command, the Acting Police Commissioner for Anambra, Mr. Haruna John said that the IED exploded and seriously wounded five policemen, who are now receiving treatment.

Also, recovered at the Silas Works Street office were a large safe believed to contain membership registers and other vital documents belonging to the hoodlums.

Mr. John said at least four policemen had been missing since the crisis in Onitsha began. He said the police would meet separately today with the Nigeria Association of Road Transport Workers (NARTO) and the National Union of Road Transport Workers (NURTW) to warn them to comply with the quit order given them by Governor Peter Obi.

The police said they are ready to enforce the government's order that the NURTW, NARTO, MASSOB and the Anambra Vigilance Service should disband by July 2, 2007.

"We are meeting with NARTO and NURTW to tell them to quit the motor parks in the state. We are taking over the parks as directed by the government. Before the week runs out, all motor parks in the state will be under our protection," Mr. John said, adding: "Our mandate is clear, we will take over the parks. The exercise is on-going. Where necessary, minimal force will be ap-

plied to accomplish the assignment."

On the 69 arrested suspects, the new Police Commissioner promised that they would be thoroughly interrogated and those not connected in any way would be released.

The Commissioner said the AK-47 rifle recovered from the hoodlums was the one attached to a police sergeant who was said to have been kidnapped three months ago by hoodlums. He is yet to be found.

The hoodlums, John said tried to engage his men in a shoot-out which led to the killing of one of the hoodlums while others sustained injuries.

"We are going to continue the operation to stop the unwarranted abduction of innocent people. Two days ago, a police officer attached to Ogidi was abducted. But we will recover him dead or alive," John said.

Speaking on the bombs and explosives, the Commanding Officer of Police Anti-Bomb for Anambra, Enugu and Ebonyi, Mr. Mansseh Awanyah, ASP who has virtually relocated to Onitsha with his men, said the team was still searching for more of such devices.

Panel on Onitsha jail break

Meanwhile, the Federal Government has set up a four-man panel of inquiry into the recent jail break in Onitsha during which over 200 inmates were reported to have escape.

Inaugurating the panel yesterday in Abuja, Secretary to the Government of the Federation (SGF), Chief Ufot Ekaette asked the panel, which has four weeks to submit its report, to examine the circumstances surrounding the jail break, the existing security arrangements at Onitsha Prison and the role of the police and other security agencies in Anambra State.

The terms of reference include: Ascertain what actually happened which led to jail break; and determine the involvement of MASSOB.

ONITSHA: 69 MASSOB members arrested

By Anayo Okoli &
Victoria Ojeme

ONITSHA — THE Joint Security team deployed to Onitsha in the aftermath of the recent break down of law and order yesterday arrested 69 people said to be members of MASSOB. Already, the Federal Gov

Continues on Page 15