

# Anambra: 4 killed in fresh attack

By Anayo Okoli

● *17 injured, police station set ablaze*

**A**WKA— HOODLUMS in Anambra State struck afresh, weekend, this time in Nnewi where they attacked the town's Central Police Station, burning it and killing two policemen. The police in turn killed two of the hoodlums.

At least 17 policemen were injured with two of them sus-

taining critical injuries. They are now receiving treatment in undisclosed hospitals. The hoodlums wore military uniform. Three police vehicles and two motorcycles were also burnt by the hoodlums.

Governor Peter Obi of Anambra State visited the station yesterday and con-

demned the attack. He asked the hoodlums to have a change of heart and stop killing and maiming innocent people. Anambra State branch of the Civil Liberties Organisation (CLO) has also condemned the attack.

Obi was received by the

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Assistant Inspector General of Police (AIG) in charge of Zone 9, Mr. Ade Ajakaiye, and the State Police Commissioner, Mr. John Haruna.

The build up to Nnewi incident started on Friday when some people believed to be members of NARTO mounted road blocks on the busy Nnewi-Nnobi road, collecting money from motorists. But the police moved in and dispersed them. On Saturday, however, they launched a reprisal attack on the Central Police Station.

The Police Commissioner said the hoodlums released a total of 14 suspects before setting the station and four vehicles on fire. His words: "A total of 14 suspects were released by them apart from this destruction that His Excellency can see. Four vehicles were burnt, three there, one Station Wagon attached to the Area Command for patrol, all were destroyed. It is unfortunate that this happened the way it did. His Excellency can see, the place is quite porous. Ordinarily, police station is to be fenced. There should be some level of security which is what is lacking here."

"We ultimately learnt that these people camped at the abandoned prison yard complex there, unfortunately, by the time we got there, they sighted us afar and escaped."

"We were told they came in a large number not just in eight buses. Apart from two lorries, they had more than 12 other buses, including a Coaster. We have recovered most of these vehicles. At least 13 of these vehicles were recovered and they escaped into the bush with their arms."

"They abandoned some of their military camouflage uniforms which were recovered. Many of them were wearing bullet proof jackets which is a serious dimension to their threat. And some of them were armed with sophisticated fire arms including AK47, some of them with pump action etc."

"The two policemen that died were among those that were injured. Several others were injured but they have been taken to various hospitals by their families. We have no concrete proof that any of them has been killed, probably they were injured and they took away their injured colleagues. So that is the situation, Your Excellency," the Police Commissioner said.

Governor Obi in his reaction expressed sympathy to the police for their men killed as well as their families. He condemned the attack. He said government would help in the burial and treatment expenditure for the dead and the injured.

Obi also promised to repair the burnt police station and try to provide new vehicles for the police. He, however, said the ongoing curfew would not be extended to Nnewi for now. He warned that government would not change its mind in flushing out hoodlums from the state.

"I want to reiterate our position that the government would not negotiate, tolerate any form of groups, or hoodlums in this state. We urge all living in this state to turn their ways and be good citizens of this state. The state is accommodating enough. We want to accommodate all. We know people might have their different interest, but we urge them to be law-abiding and be good citizens," he said.

Earlier in a statement, the governor had condemned the attack, saying: "Hoodlums believed to be those dislodged from Onitsha motor parks, markets and other public places on July 22, 2006 torched the Central Police Station, Nnewi, reducing the premises to ashes. They also

killed two policemen and burnt vehicles."

"Spotting military uniform and waving 'Biafran' flags apparently to deceive the public into believing that all of them were MASSOB members, they descended on this quiet commercial city, taking the citizens and security operatives unawares."

"The Anambra State Government urges citizens of the state not to panic as a result of this latest round of disturbances."

"It is all about the management of Anambra State resources — government purse and fees accruable through various Internally Generate Revenue (IGR) sources for instance motor parks, markets etc."

It will be recalled that different groups had hijacked the collection of fees at motor parks

either directly or through surrogates. Past administrations tolerated these groups in Anambra State partly or wholly, but this present one has said no to the diversion of public funds to private pockets, hence this current problem in the state.

"Having been dislodged from Onitsha, these miscreants now shift to other commercial cities like Ekwulobia and Nnewi. Government is currently investigating them. It has been discovered that key participants in the disturbances who are sponsored by a group of disgruntled politicians, used to benefit from this confusion and to live off the resources meant for the development of Anambra State. "Meanwhile, these pertinent questions are worth raising: why is it that it is only in Anambra State that

MASSOB activities are pronounced? Why and how has MASSOB suddenly acquired so many vehicles in Anambra State? If MASSOB is truly about sovereignty of Biafra, why is the struggle localised in Anambra State and not carried to other parts of the South-East with the same intensity?"

"The truth is that many wealthy people with secret agenda are backing these groups which operate as NARTO, AVS, Bakassi Boys, etc."

"The Anambra State Government calls on law-abiding citizens of the state and visitors to go about their lawful business. It assures that genuine and committed security operatives have since taken charge of affairs in Nnewi and other major cities in the state."

## Nigerians favour Buhari, IBB, Utomi, Akunyili

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sir el-Rufai; Governor Sam Egwu of Ebonyi State and Governor Donald Duke of Cross River State.

Of all the nominees, only Professor Akunyili, Mallam el-Rufai and Governor Duke have not shown interest in 2007 presidential race.

The history-making event, still in the preliminary stage, is being conducted by the Silverbird Group, owners of Silverbird Television and the

Rhythm Radio franchise and Vanguard Newspapers.

Nominations were received by text, over a seven-week period, which started on May 29 and ended on July 22, 2006. Members of the public were asked to choose "A People's President" devoid of party affiliations, but a distinguished Nigerian from any walk of life.

The verification of the text nominations was done by Akinola Williams Deloitte. All other phases of the project

will also be verified by Akinola Williams Deloitte, the official Auditors of the project. The 10 received the highest number of votes.

The Silverbird Group and Vanguard Newspapers thanked all those who participated in the Popularity Poll for making the preliminary stage of this epoch making event a success, and at the same time craved their indulgence for participation of the final stages. Further details will be announced soon.

## Better deal for N-Delta coming— US

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there.

In the meantime, the Federal Government is set to sign a Production Sharing Contract (PSC) agreement this week with multinational oil exploration and production companies that secured oil and gas blocs in this year's mini licensing round.

The US Consul General in the country, Mr. Brian Brown on a courtesy visit to the Ijaw national leader Chief Edwin Clark at his Kiagbodo country home in Delta State, weekend, advised the Niger Delta people to continue to compromise when necessary and dialogue with government and the oil companies to get a just deal for the region.

Chief Clark who expressed delight at the visit of the American consul had earlier said hostage-taking by youths in the Niger Delta was borne out of frustration and deprivations by the army of unemployed youths who felt that their elders had failed them by not ensuring that they were given employment in oil companies in their domains.

He complained, for instance, that Chevron Oil Company, which is an American firm, has its headquarters in Lagos while the field operations were carried out in the Niger Delta. According to him, the people of the region were not happy by such a development and would want the headquarters of Chevron to be brought to Warri, that of Mobil to Eket and Elf to Bayelsa State.

Clark told the American consul that hostage-taking persisted in the region because the people still drank industrial water from the Chevron and suffer oil health implications as a result of oil exploration but the companies simply refused to do anything or do so little.

### US wants dialogue

Mr. Brown who commended Clark for his leadership qualities and desire to see the development and prosperity of his people said the people of the Niger

Delta should learn that there was not bound to be agreement on every issue, and therefore, develop relationship and trust with both the government and the oil companies.

He said it was not for the people or even the government of the United States to decide where Chevron should site its headquarters in Nigeria, noting that all over the world, there is a difference between the operational areas of a company and its headquarters, which are usually in the business capitals. Mr. Brown said as germane as the case of the people of the region was, they had to continue to dialogue with the oil companies to assist them because the companies were not government and should not be coerced into doing things that are not in their agenda.

He said the American government would be able to put a word to Chevron to make its employment policy non-discriminatory if that was the case but said if the right business environment was not created, the companies would not be able to work in the region.

Thanking the Ijaw leader for the role he played in the release of hostages kidnapped by the militants, he said the people of the zone should grow above such means of protesting under-development in their area, as foreigners who were not the cause of their anger were being subjected to unnecessary terror.

Chief Clark agreed with him that the oil companies would run away if the people remained or continued to be hostile and pledged that they were ready for dialogue but just that at times, the people who ought to take decisions that would help the situation were inconsiderate and slow.

### FG, multinational set to sign PSC

Meanwhile, the Federal Government is set to sign a Production Sharing Contract (PSC) agreement this week, with mul-

tinational oil exploration and production companies which participated and secured oil and gas blocks in the 2006 mini licensing round.

Mr. Tony Chukwueke, Director-General of the Department of Petroleum Resources (DPR) told Vanguard yesterday in Lagos that the signing had been unduly delayed for reasons beyond the control of the department, pointing out, however, that arrangements had been concluded to have the PSCs signed with operators of non-controversial oil blocks.

"Definitely, we foresee the Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation (NNPC) signing the PSCs before the end of the month with the Chinese National Petroleum Corporation (CNPC), ONGC of India and BG-Sahara," he said.

Although there are indications that the delay in signing of the PSC may not be unconnected with the attachment of Local Content Vehicles (LCV) to the oil blocks, Mr. Chukwueke said the Department was set to inspire confidence in all stakeholders through its transparent conduct.

On the other winners who emerged from the exercise, Mr. Chukwueke assured that the signing process would continue till everybody's interest was addressed. The other companies which participated in the mini licensing round are: Cleanwaters Consortium, Ni-Delta United Oil Company, ONGC Mittal, Global Steel Holding, INC Natural Resources Exploration, Transnational Corporation, NAOC/Lotus, ONGC Videsh, and CPC/Starcrest Energy.

Nine of the oil blocks put on offer were relinquished by operators of the 1993-1998 Production Sharing Contracts (PSC) through mandatory adherence to existing regulations, while four other blocks are those withdrawn from the 2005 bid round for which the winners defaulted in payment of signature bonus.