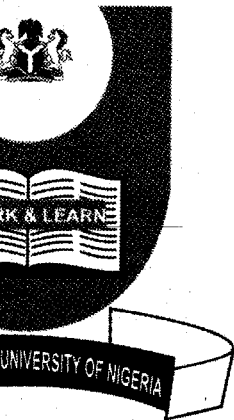


# 10 policemen fall to robbers, militants' fire

ents: NJC  
Chief Judges

has suspended four state  
chief judges with immediate  
effect. They are Justice Chu

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● *17 die in road crash*

By Ben Agande, Dayo  
Johnson, Ola Ajayi &  
Jimitota Onoyume



**NATIONAL HONOUR AWARDS:** President Olusegun Obasanjo presents a National Honour Award to Mrs Oluremi Oyo in Abuja, yesterday. Photo by Gbemiga Olamikan.  
*More Pix on Page 51*

AS Nigerians proceed, to  
day, on the Christmas  
holidays, the country yester-  
day lost 27 of its citizens, 10  
of them policemen, to separate  
incidents of militants' attack,  
robbery, and road crash.

Seventeen of the victims  
died at dawn yesterday in a  
motor accident on the Akure-  
Ondo road after two commer-  
cial vehicles carrying market  
women and traders to Akure  
and Ondo collided.

*Vanguard* gathered that the  
crash which involved two  
Toyota Hiace commercial buses  
occurred at about 6.30a.m.  
at Wasimi village. Only three  
passengers survived the ac-  
cident. They are now on the  
danger list at the State Special-  
ist Hospital.

The Ondo State Sector  
Commander of the Federal  
Road Safety Commission, Mr.  
Ahmed Hassan, attributed the

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# 10 policemen fall to robbers, militants' fire

*Continues from Page 1*

crash to excessive speeding by the drivers of the two vehicles, who also lost their lives. "One of the vehicles was trying to overtake another when it had a head-on collision with the oncoming commercial bus," he said.

Passersby and other motorists used cutlasses, axes and other sharp objects to cut open the vehicles before the trapped bodies of victims could be removed. Hassan added that 11 men and six women, mostly traders, died in the accident. Most of the victims were Igbo traders.

The bodies of the victims have already been deposited at the mortuary of the State Specialist Hospital in Ondo.

Friends and relations rushed to the hospital as news of the accident broke. They wailed and cried as they identified the victims.

## Robbers kill 7 cops in Ibadan

In the second incident — a robbery operation in Ibadan — bandits went on the rampage at Agbowo area of the city where they attacked two banks and killed seven policemen.

The robbers numbering 30 reportedly arrived Agbowo at about midnight and fired three shots to warn residents that they were around before launching their operation.

When *Vanguard* visited the scene yesterday, there were two police vans and a blue car marked LAGOS CA 225 GGE riddled with bullets. One of the vehicles with number plate PF 874 HQ was stained with blood. There were also blood stains at the gates of the University of Ibadan.

The robbers who operated between midnight and 3:40a.m. also trailed another police van marked 033 and riddled it with bullets.

The deadly acts left some traders in the area losing goods worth millions of naira as a result of fire that gutted their shops. The fire was triggered off when the robbers shot at the tank of another police van which exploded and burnt no fewer than 18 shops by the roadside.

Confirming the incident, the Police Public Relations Officer, Mr. Olu Akinmoladun, said only two policemen were killed while four others were lying critically wounded at the University College Hospital (UCH), Ibadan.

He said: "Around 1:00a.m., we got a distress call that there was a bank robbery at Agbowo area. So, we mobilised our patrol team from the metropolis. But along the

line, two of our police vans ran into an ambush laid by the robbers and we lost two of our men, while four others are lying critically ill in the UCH now. We lost one patrol man and a driver."

Overwhelmed by the superior firepower of the robbers, the police had to use an Armoured Personnel Carrier to repel the attack. Sources in the area said some policemen escaped into the campus of UI when the firepower of the robbers was too much to bear.

Asked if any arrest was made, Akinmoladun answered in the negative but said the hoodlums had their own casualties. "At the end, we succeeded in chasing the hoodlums away, but they succeeded in robbing one of the banks," he said.

A night guard who narrowly escaped being killed said when the robbers arrived, they first fired three warning shots and went straight to two commercial banks close to the University of Ibadan.

He said they held the security men of the banks hostage and directed them to open the gates of the bank. They were up to 30, fully armed men and women.

*Vanguard* later gathered that the robbers used a welding machine to break the vaults and carted away an undisclosed amount of money.

Two of the shop owners counted their losses as a result of the fire incident. They said 18 shops containing electronics like deep freezers, cookers, and many other electric gadgets worth over N5 million were burnt. One of the victims said she had only a days before stocked her shop with goods worth about N500,000.

## Militants kill 3 cops

Also yesterday, armed militants in speedboats killed three policemen in an overnight attack on a residential facility belonging to French oil company, Total.

"In Obagi, we have three deaths among the policemen guarding the facility", a company spokesman at the group's headquarters in France said, adding that no Total employee had been killed.

"This was not a political attack, it was a case of banditry.

There were no hostages taken," he added.

No one has so far claimed responsibility for the attack.

An industry official speaking on condition of anonymity said the attack at Obagi, outside the Rivers State capital, Port Harcourt, was carried out by masked men who stormed the place in speed boats.

Total is the fifth largest oil operator in Nigeria.

A second car on Monday hit a facility owned by Italian firm Agip. Neither blast caused any casualties and material damage was minimal. The Rivers government said in a statement it had

held a security meeting with Sh and Agip over the incidents.

Meanwhile, the Asari Dokub led Niger Delta Peoples Volunteer Force in an online statement yesterday called for the immediate release of its detained leader. Threatening violence in the region, it said the release was the only condition for peace. The statement reads: "We foresee exodus of heavily armed young men from the creeks into the streets of Port Harcourt. We foresee an increased number of explosions in corporate establishments, government buildings and government motorcades. We foresee deaths and assassinations.

## Impeachments: NJC s

*Continues from Page 1*

Justice Jideofor Okoli (Anambra), Justice Ya'u Dakwang (Plateau), Justice Kayode Bamishile (Ekiti), and Justice Jubril Aladejana who was appointed the acting Chief Judge of Ekiti State by the state House of Assembly after his boss was controversially removed by the lawmakers.

Their suspension, according to the NJC, was sequel to the roles they played in the recent impeachment of the governors of their respective states.

Executive Secretary of the Council, Mr. Danladi Halilu, in a statement said: "The National Judicial Council in the exercise of its power under paragraph 21 (d) of the Third Schedule to the 1999 Constitution gave the suspension at its recent emergency meeting which was held on 20th December 2006 in Abuja."

NJC is headed by the Chief Justice of the Federation, Justice Alifa Modibo Belgore. It has the statutory power of confirming and firing of judicial officers on the recommendation of either the President or the governor of a state depending on the status of the judicial officer and where he is serving.

Specifically, Section 292 (1) (a) (b) of the 1999 constitution provides: "A judicial officer shall not be removed from his office or appointment before his age of retirement except in the following circumstances. (a) In the case of: (i)

Chief Justice of Nigeria, President of the Court of Appeal, Chief Judge of the Federal High Court, Chief Judge of the High Court of the Federal Capital Territory, Abuja and President, Customary Court of Appeal of the FCT, Abuja or the President acting on an address supported by two third majority of the Senate.

(ii) Chief Judge of a state, Governor of a Sharia Court of Appeal or President of a Customary Court of Appeal of a state by the governor acting on an address by two third majority of the House of Assembly of the state, praying that he be so removed for his inability to discharge the functions of his office or appointment (whether arising from infirmity of mind or body) or for misconduct or contravention of the Code of Conduct.

(b) In any case, other than those to which paragraph (a) of this subsection applies, by the President or, as the case may be, the governor acting on the recommendation of the National Judicial Council that the judicial officer be so removed."

By implication, if the erring judicial officer is not the head of the judiciary, recommendation for his removal requires the assent of the President if he is a Federal High Court judge while the assent of the state governor is needed if the erring judicial officer serves in a state judiciary.

The suspension of the four judicial officers, however, is to last until the committee set up by the council to investigate the allegations

## Atiku denied use of Presidential p

was told it had been grounded by the president.

Minister of Information and National Orientation, Mr. Frank Nweke (Jnr), feigned ignorance of the matter when State House correspondents asked him about it yesterday after the weekly Federal Executive Council meeting.

"I am hearing it from you now and I will find out", he said as he rushed out to attend the conferment of national honours

on Nigerians.

*Vanguard* gathered that the Vice President's team had already boarded the aircraft when the one that took President Olusegun Obasanjo to the USA landed at the President disembarked. He was said to have ordered that the other aircraft should not take the Vice President anywhere.

The Vice President and his team later joined a British Airways plane to London en route United States. The Vice President had Tuesday travelled to Lagos