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Nigeria: Police Kill Two Suspected Robbers

Evelyn Usman and Austine Anozie

30 July 2009

The Police in Lagos have shot dead two suspects who were said to be members of a robbery gang allegedly terrorizing residents of Ebute-Metta area of Lagos and its environs during a gun battle, even as they have arrested a man who disguises as a woman to extort money from unsuspecting individuals, particularly men.

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The bandits numbering six according to source, specialized in robbing traders around Ebute-Metta and Oyingbo of their cash and other valuables.

They were said to have been at the verge of snatching a Toyota Camry with number plate BQ 942 RSF at about 9pm on Wednesday when men of the Rapid Response Squad who acted on tip off, intercepted them on the Eko bridge, in the process a gun duel reportedly ensued. Police

sources said the bandits were among those whose names had been on their wanted list.

Two locally made pistols, including twelve live cartridges, according to the command's image maker, Mr Frank Mba, were recovered at the end of the encounter. He, however, lamented that others escaped with their two operational motorcycles.

Similarly, the man arrested disguising as a woman, Uche Okoro, who was said to have been

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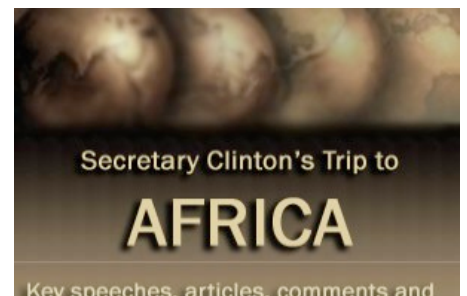
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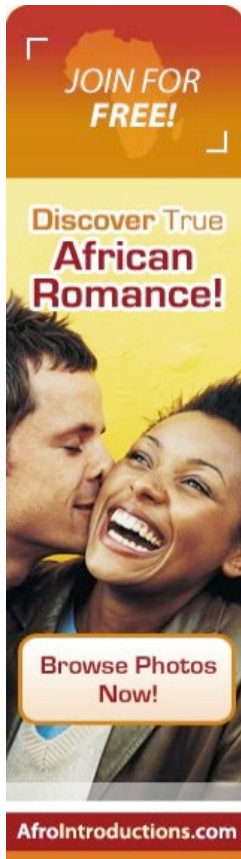
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earlier arrested in 2006 and remanded in prison custody for allegedly parading himself as Perpetual Nwokocho, captain of the national female football team, blamed the society and the harsh economy for his indulgence.

19-year-old Uche who claimed to come all the way from Umuahia to Lagos, to extort people, explained to a bewildered crowd that he went into such act when all effort to get help from people as a man, failed.

Said he, "I dress this way so as to get help from people after every effort I put in as a man failed. I realised that people do not help men but women. What I do is to stand on the road and tell people that I am a female footballer who is stranded. I come all the way from Umuahia, Abia State and use the money I realise to cater for my siblings who are all females and who depend on me, as our parents are both dead and I do not want any of them to go into prostitution"

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The bubble however burst Tuesday, when as usual he posed as a lady at Mushin area of Lagos waiting for his next prey, only for someone who knew his true identify to raise an alarm, following which an angry mob reportedly descended on him. But for

the timely intervention of policemen from Alapere division, the mob who were also at the verge of stripping him naked to ascertain his true sex, would have also lynched him.

Parading him yesterday, the command's spokesman, Mr Frank Mba, noted that the crime committed was not a capital one but said the Police would however carry out investigation to look at his motive of disguising as a woman.

He, however, made a clarion call to well meaning Nigerians, including the Actors Guild of Nigeria to consider if Uche could be used to portray such negative tendencies in a positive light.

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