



# CrimeGuard

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## Policeman, suspected pipeline vandal killed in Lagos

• Residents send SOS to Federal, state government over activities of vandals in Iba

By ESTHER ONYEGBULA

Victory Estate in Iba local Council Development Area of Lagos State was last Friday shaken to its very foundation following sporadic gunshots later discovered to be between pipeline vandals and policemen.

Before the incident, the residents had reportedly been living in fear as a result of activities of pipeline vandals, even in a broad day light.

The amazing discovery as reliably gathered, was the alleged involvement of policemen and officials of the Nigerian Security and Civil Defense Corps, mandated to check the menace.

It was gathered that these security agents allegedly assisted vandals to carry the

siphoned product into thier vehicles and sometimes escort them

out of the estate.

The vandals, sometimes, reportedly

came with trucks which they loaded the siphoned products, with the security agents accused of looking the other way.

At the end of each successful exercise, the Policemen and Civil Defence officials would allegedly be given an undisclosed amount for aiding the vandals' illegal activities.

This was usually the routine until last Friday, when things fell apart for all parties, leading to a gun battle between a team of policemen and vandals.

### Reason?

It was gathered that in spite of the alleged monetary tips, different teams of policemen under the Area 'E' Command, Festac, suddenly began to effect the arrest of vandals while in the act.

Eye witnesses told *Crime Guard* that normal life activities was distorted penultimate Friday, as the vandals numbering over 20 (dressed like militants) stormed the area, and reportedly opened fire on a team of policemen around the canal whom they accused of apprehending their colleagues. The policemen said to have been taken unawares, according to eye witnesses, fled, with one of them abandoning his r i f f l e .

The sporadic gun shots said to have lasted close to one hour, between the vandals and a reinforcement teams, reportedly left a policeman from Adorf division and one of the

vandals dead.

But the dead vandal was said to have been dragged into his colleagues speed boats when it became apparent that the policemen were having an upper hand.

When *Crime Guard* visited the area Wednesday, it looked a shadow of its self as some of the residents had fled their homes for fear of the unknown, owing to what they described as regular raids and subsequent arrest of innocent persons by policemen under Area E Command.

About ten landlords were reportedly arrested but later released while others, majority of who were youths were still in police custody.

Some of the residents who mustered courage to remain, declined speaking with *Crime Guard*. However, those who spoke did so on condition of anonymity.

Narrating what happened, one of them said: "You needed to have been here last Friday. This place was like a theater of war. The vandals' apparels were similar to those worn by Niger-Delta militants. They tied their heads with red clothes. They came through the swamp via boats. They had a misunderstanding with police over payment issue. They said they were tired of paying different teams of policemen who usually stormed the place. We were told that some of the policemen arrested their men even after collecting money from them.

"Since the unfortunate incident, policemen kept coming to arrest people, consequently shops have been closed.

People can't go about their normal businesses for fear of being arrested. Innocent law-abiding landlords and tenants who were going on their normal business activities were arrested, including the estate lawyer."

### Steps taken

Activities of vandals according to one of the landlords, was first noticed in the area two years ago. Asked what step was taken to arrest the situation, the landlord who would not want his

name mentioned in prints, said: "When we noticed their activities, the Association of Landlord wrote a letter to Adolf Police station and copied Iba and Ojo divisions including the Area E Command, Festac. Unfortunately, only the Police at Adolf acknowledged receipt but nothing was done to check the menace. Rather than acting, the policemen started romancing the vandals. For instance, policemen from Iba division will come as they are leaving, those from Adolf will appear, including those from Area E Command, to collect revenues from the vandals.

Over 400 gallons of 50 liters jerricans loaded with petroleum product were carried out by these vandals daily. Initially, they used to come at midnight but later started coming during day time. But for this incident, you would have seen the vandals with motorcycles riding to and fro with at least six gallons of petrol on each motorbike.

"When nothing was done by relevant authorities to address the issue, we sensitized residents, landlords and tenants not to participate in the activities so that when the bubble burst, we won't be accused of indulgence. We do not even know where the pipes are laid let alone to know how to go about siphoning the product".


The residents therefore, called on the relevant authorities, particularly the Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation to come to their aid to put an end the activities of vandals which they feared might resume.

*Crime Guard* also visited the Iba Local Council Development Area, to get the reaction of the council boss, Princess Ramota Oseni Adeyemi on the issue. She simply stated that she was neither aware of last Friday's incident nor activities of vandals in Victory Estate.

However Police sources at Area E Command Festac, said the raid was part of measures put in place to checkmate activities of pipeline vandals, describing claims that policemen were aiding the vandals as untrue.



• The route through which pipeline vandals come into Victory estate to siphon fuel.



## Vanguard

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