

CrimeAlert

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FOR several months, confusion and anxiety gripped the people of Uzo-Uwani Local Government Area in Enugu State following incessant robbery attacks along the only major highway linking the agriculturally-rich area with other towns. At the last count, no fewer than five lives have been lost in daylight robbery attacks by bandits who were usually armed with sophisticated weapons.

During one of the attacks which took place last month at Nkpunator community in the area, a middle-aged driver attached to the state transport company, Entraco, was killed by heavily armed gunmen that waylaid him on the expressway. The driver who plies the Nkpologwu-Nsukka route was identified simply as Isaac.

He allegedly met his death while conveying passengers to Nsukka. Unknown to him, armed robbers had taken over the major road linking Nkpologwu, Opanda, Adani and Umulokpa headquarters of the local government, robbing unsuspected travelers of their valuables and cash.

Death of driver

Crime Alert gathered that as soon as the driver discovered a road block mounted by men of the underworld, he immediately put the car in reverse, not knowing that the robbers were in two groups, one ahead of him and the other behind. They hemmed him in and shot him dead instantly.

The death of the driver heightened tension in the community as youths in their hundreds trooped out for a showdown with the Police in the area, accusing them of not checking the excesses of Fulani herdsmen whom they alleged carry out the attacks regularly.

Attack on wedding guests

The highway connecting Adani-Nsukka where traders from Benue and Kogi ply regularly has made armed robbers find the place a fertile area to operate

To worsen the already volatile situation, few days later, another robbery attack was carried out, leading to the brutal murder of another indigene of the area.

This time around, armed men intercepted a commuter bus loaded with passengers traveling to attend a wedding ceremony along Nkpologwu-Aku axis, robbed them of cash and valuables and took one of them whose identity was not known into the bush where his dead body was discovered few hours later.

Genesis: Investigations re-



• One of the victims, Friday Ugwu still in hospital

vealed that based on these attacks, the local government chairman, Cornell Onwubuya, engaged the services of local vigilante groups to patrol the road, an effort aimed at curbing the excesses of the hoodlums.

Unfortunately, he could not maintain their services which compelled them to disband. They were reportedly paid a paltry sum of N5,000 just once, after which they were left to fend for themselves. They were also operating without necessary tools like torchlights and other security gadgets needed to in such situations. As soon as they were off the road, hell was let loose. All manner of

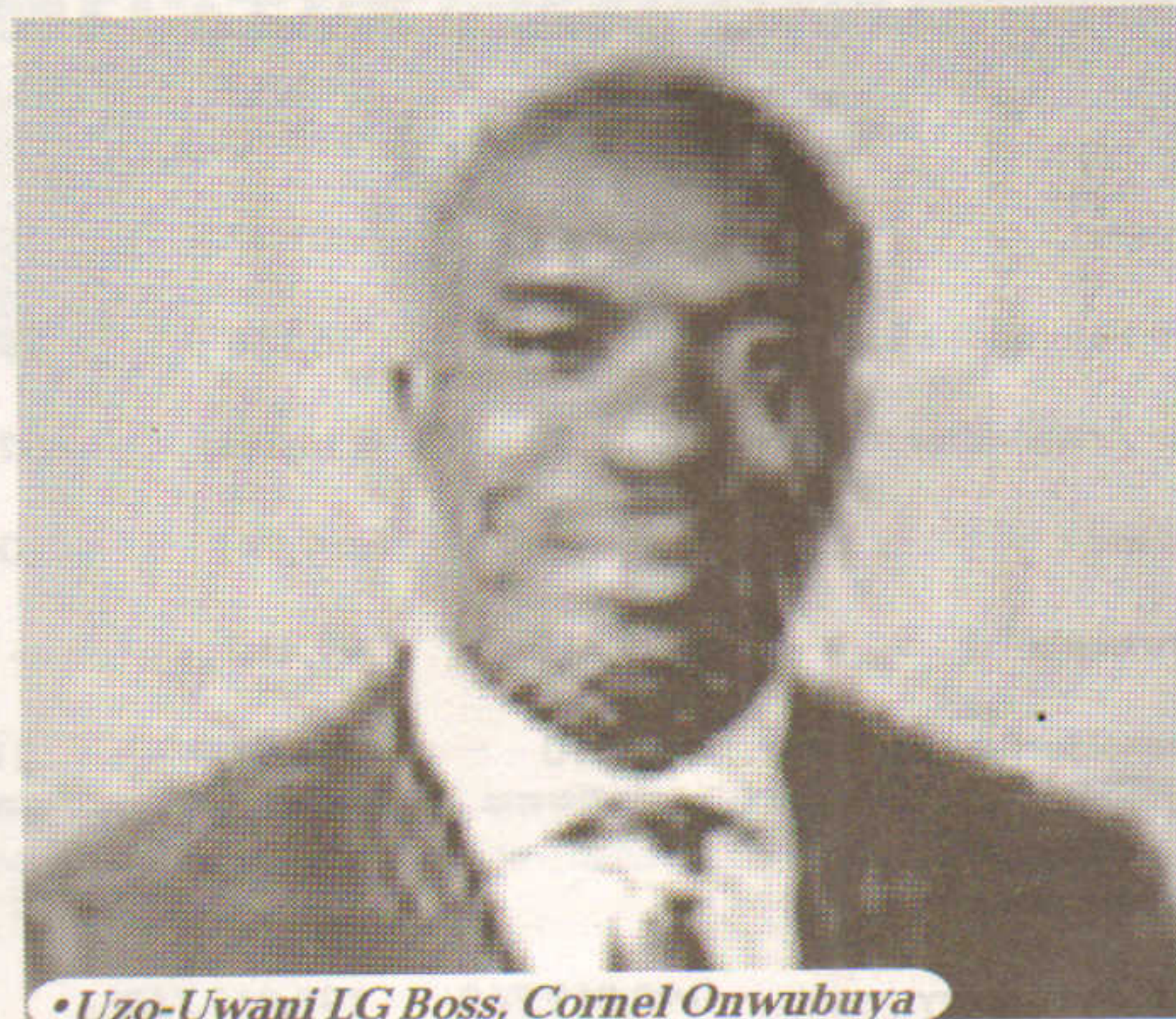
however, came to the rescue by drafting a crack team to patrol the areas and tackle the hoodlums. He also met with the local government boss with a view to beefing up security in the area but unfortunately, his efforts did not yield commensurate results as the robbery attacks continued on the expressway.

Angry youths react

Based on this development, angry youths from Abbi Community in the area took the law into their hands by destroying properties worth millions naira belonging to one of their prominent sons who erected a Police post at the boundary between Nrobo and their community. The youths alleged that the man that built the post had ulterior motives.

All efforts by the vice-chairman of the local government Maxwell Odekpe, who hails from the community and his father who also is the traditional ruler of the community to pacify the irate youths fell on deaf ears. The chairman of the council washed his hands off the development, saying that those involved in the destruction of someone's property should face the wrath of the law.

The matter is still pending at Zone 9 Police Command in Umuahia, Abia State where both the traditional ruler and three others including the vice-chair-



• Uzo-Uwani LG Boss, Cornell Onwubuya



• Enugu-C

Insecurity: LG on war path in

man reportedly made statements.

Stakeholders meet

Crime Alert gathered that the visibly disturbed local government boss, Cornell Onwubuya reacted sharply by summoning a meeting of all stakeholders on the security of the area.

During the meeting which took place at the local government headquarters in Umulokpa, the council boss reportedly lampooned the police at Adani which he accused of not helping matters along Nsukka-Adani expressway in the area.

He noted that the area has in the recent past been nearly overrun by Fulani herdsmen and armed robbers who carried out attacks almost on weekly basis, pointing out that the security of life and property remains paramount as the situation along Adani-Nsukka expressway has gone beyond imagination.

Beyond imagination

He also assured that the council has reinforced Police assisted neighborhood watch in the area to patrol the road day and night under the direct supervision of his office.

He noted that the measures put in place was to restore security in the local government area, attributing the high rate of crime to the volatile nature of the area which he said serves as gateway to Benue and Kogi states for traders who ply the road on daily basis in convoy.

S.O.S to the Federal government: "Uzo-Uwani is a vast area, we have Fulani and armed

robbery problems. The highway connecting Adani to Nsukka where traders from Benue and Kogi ply regularly has attracted armed robbers, who find the place a fertile area to operate.

The deplorable nature of the highway further give criminals impetus to operate and I am using this opportunity to call on the Federal Government to come to our aid by rehabilitating the road. We need Federal Government to intervene to help reconstruct Adani-Nsukka highway and to also deploy military men and heavily armed policemen to the highway in conjunction with the local vigilante. This will help control activities of hoodlums along the road."

Police accused

He stressed that the area serves as a gateway to Anambra, Benue and Kogi states.

"The council has not enjoyed much-desired Police co-operation whose obligation is to safeguard lives and property of residents, despite huge investment of the council on security agencies at Adani and Umulokpa divisions.

The police have not done much to bring crime along the highway under control; we are aware that the policemen posted to the highway were not doing enough to nip the situation in the bud as they fail to patrol the road but only stay at spots where they cannot repel the hoodlums and blame their inefficiency on lack of enough

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