CHALLENGES OF HOSTAGE-TAKING AND KIDNAPPING IN THE SOUTH EASTERN NIGERIA

PROTUS NATHAN UZORMA[1] & JOHN NWANEGBO-BEN[2]

[1]University of Uyo, Akwa Ibom, Nigeria

[2]Federal University of Technology, Owerri, Imo State, Nigeria

ABSTRACT

Before now, hostage-taking and kidnapping have existed in varied forms and for varied reasons in Nigeria. But they were not known to be among the business ventures Nigerians are known for. However today, they have become a big industry and a steady source of income for many, particularly in the South-East. The duo crimes thrive almost in the entire neighbourhood in this region and the adjoining states. Many residents know the traders, where they operate, but watch helplessly as the culture of the area seems to consider any criminal venture that yields wealth to their citizens as "business," especially if the criminal operates in areas far from home. What are the reasons behind this illicit business? Why and how are they flourishing in this region? Who are the perpetrators of the crime? What are their effects in the country? What is the Nigeria Police Force doing about it? These and many more form the fulcrum of this discussion.

KEYWORDS: Peculiar Crime, Kidnapping, National Agencies

INTRODUCTION

The Phenomenon of Hostage-Taking and Kidnapping

Hostage taking and Kidnapping are among the terrorising crimes in Nigeria. They are mostly common in the southern part of the country (South-South, South-East and South-West). Practically, the duo entails abduction. Thus, it occurs when a person is abducted and taken from one place to another against their will, or a situation in which a person is confined to a controlled space without the confinement being from a legal authority. Consequently, when the transportation or confinement of the person is done for an unlawful purpose, such as for ransom or for the purpose of committing another crime, the act becomes criminal: For example, kidnapping a bank officer's family in order to gain assistance in robbing a bank. Or abducting and eloping with a girl for the purpose of initializing or finalizing sexual or nuptial plans against the wish of the parents or guardian, especially an underage.

A certain degree of subtlety can be made between hostage-taking (or abduction) and kidnapping as it applies in daily realities in the South-Eastern Nigeria. Hostage-taking or abduction occurs when someone uses force or deceit to take another person away from their home or relatives for unknown reasons. The abductors do not reveal their motive for taking away the person or the child. In legal definition, the victim knows or has some sort of relation with the abductor. The victim can be a minor or an adult. The most common cases of hostage-taking are seen in divorce cases, where one parent is given the sole custody of a child, as a psychological means of maltreating the other with the impinged sense of loss, notably in Africa and Nigeria where biological succession is a perfect testimony of self-actualization- Continuity of race and name, having made it or having something to show one's ancestors.

Similarly, kidnapping can be defined as the act of seizing and detaining or carrying away a person by unlawful force or by fraud, and often with a demand for ransom. It involves taking a person from their family forcefully without their consent with the motive of holding the person as a hostage and earning a profit from their family. In this regard, kidnapping could be for a number of reasons such as getting monetary reward, or getting some sort of benefits from the person. It is usually done for a motive or for oppressive intentions, the most common of which is extorting money from the family of the victim in form of ransom for freedom and continual living. Based on these discrepancies one finds in kidnapping, cognate terms like hostage-taking, abduction, hijacking, capturing, etc.

As peculiar crimes, hostage-taking and kidnapping are deviant behaviours that are unique in intended teleology, synaptic of analogous crimes, universal in specific areas of ravage, prevalent with relative intensity which spate of ravage may be spasmodic or regular, and creating tensed zeitgeist. Hostage-taking and kidnapping are cognate crimes that have culture and metamorphoses. This crime culture's metamorphosis is determined by the type of social and value-systems operational in the society and these societal value systems and mechanism typify and localize the crime circumstances and events. Thus peculiarity of crimes has implications on a locality, the prevailing socio-economic activities in it, the topography of the area (that the criminals themselves spend time to survey and study during crime-incubation in order to master and dominion over it), the pedigree and structure of insecurity and safety-consciousness of the area, as well as human readiness to onslaught and blitz miscreants in their mist. However, crime metamorphosed stages are at each state and stage unique as a total independent entity, while determinately heading to its full maturity and blossoming stage. Crime culture is the determinant factor of crime typology and peculiarities, whether the metamorphosed culture is seen as a way of living (for the perpetrators) or way of surviving (for the victims). The more sophisticated and organised it is, the higher the typology and peculiarities become.

Ugwulebo (2011:52-53) on this phenomenology of hostage-taking and kidnapping, observed that kidnapping as an organized crime is better noticed when a victim's relations are bringing the ransom. He cited an incident in which the wife of a victim was asked to bring the ransom to a particular sport in the World Bank Housing Estate area in Owerri, Imo State. When she reached the spot, they called her and asked her some questions which she answered. She was then directed to go to a place between Egbu and Owerri capital city. This she did. After another round of interrogation, they referred her to somewhere in Mbaise (another Local Government Area in Imo State). By this time, it was getting dark. From the point agreed, they ordered her to board a motorcycle to another point further into the hinterlands and drop the money. After she dropped the money, they told her to go so that they could count the money and be sure it was complete before releasing her husband. She was also told that her husband would be released at mid-night. Anxiety enveloped her. True to their promise, they released her husband but at Elele (Rivers State). Evidently, this shows that hostage-taking and kidnapping in the South-Eastern Nigeria are well organized and involve a web of field professional performing different tasks for the achievement of their goal and for the survival of their syndicates.

Reasons and Development of the Crime in the South-Eastern Nigeria

Several reasons have been attributed to as the rationale behind the thriving of hostage-taking and kidnapping in the South-Eastern Nigeria. The major reasons have been: Moral decadence, unemployment, inequitable distribution of developmental projects, inordinate amassment of wealth and looting of public funds by public office holders, abandonment of the masses, poverty, unrealisable expectations from children by their parents and relatives, **societal pressures forcing**

adults who have come of age to be independent and to take care of the family. Others are fast means of make quick huge cash and wealth. While a great number of people believe that the trade is thriving because most of the people involved wield powerful influence with which they circumvent the law.

Hostage-taking and kidnapping in the South-Eastern Nigeria thrive firstly, as a result of the fast mount of moral decadence and societal mentality on wealth and its acquisition amongst youths and adults, which result to the worship of money irrespective of the means of making it. Secondly, unemployment is ascribed to as the major factor for the blossoming of hostage-taking and kidnapping in the South-Eastern Nigeria as it is adjudged, is a self-employment opportunity wherein the clever and the unemployed few find avenues of cutting their own share from the fewer affluent in the society.

Inequitable distribution of developmental projects and public fundloots are other reasons while the crime thrives. The South-Southern Nigeria where hostage-taking and kidnapping for ransom began in this millennium, had these reasons alleged as the rationale behind the terror of the indigenes who took to the crime of hostage-taking and kidnapping in order to let the Federal Government know that despite the fact the country's wealth comes from their area, they suffer untold environmental hazards and are underdeveloped, while the other parts of the country are developed with the money produced in their region. The South-Eastern region had similar tales as well as the loot of public funds by public office holders, which results to underdevelopment that impoverishes the masses. The teaming unemployment youths and deprived members of the society took to the abduction of these fellows or their family members upon whom they drain huge sums from the corrupt office holders and affluent in their society, who are seen as those that took entirely everything meant for the general good of everybody.

Another reason for the crime thrive, is the crime-culture and metamorphosis. Hostage-taking and kidnapping in the South-Eastern Nigeria has come to stay not only as a peculiar crime but a familiarized one. Familiarization gives orientation and assures adaptation, acquaintance and habit. These are counter-studied by the criminals. They study the ways the society reacts at their strike, studies them and their activities, and thereunto arrive at safe grounds, after synthesizing the societal antithetical familiarization approaches and coming out with a fresh enigmatic thesis for survival and assault, which *ab initio* gives them advantage over the society in ravage. The more studies for survival and continuity of business that the criminals make from the background of the victim's mentality when ravaged, the more sophisticated, thriving and advanced their crime cultural metamorphosis gets. This advancement of the crime metamorphosis consequently results in *syndicalism* of the crime enterprise. Syndicalism in hostage-taking and kidnapping in the South-Eastern Nigeria allows for varied sorts of professionalism and interest partnership in the enterprise, which becomes self-engagement for the jobless. Every professional in this sector acts as the main boss, while in actual sense they are linkages that work together with a central gang, therein assisting each to achieve security aims, survival onus and continuity assurance.

Consequently the victims and the criminal on their own tries to attenuate the height the other has attained or reached and gain dominance while the other studies this attenuation as onslaught and projects defence for greater survival- The abductors here have upper hand as it is what they do daily for sustenance. Thus, an eternal cycle of self-preservation strategies arises between the ravaged society and the scavenging deviants. Impetuosity thus tends to characterise the weaker, which obviously is the victims.

Studies have also revealed that one of the major reasons why hostage-taking and kidnapping thrives in the South-Eastern Nigeria is that most wealthy citizens of the area and the law enforcement agencies, especially the Police Force have some corrupt fellows that corroborate with the criminals, aiding them with arms, information and strategies for assault. It is also alleged that most times, the ravaged society gives the Police basic information about crime events and criminals, and in turn gives counter information to the criminals on enhanced strategies for crime policing. It is suggestive that these happen because the trio of the abductors, the victims (the ravaged society) and the Police are compatriots of same society; just as both the victims and the miscreants are co-inhabitants of same ravaged cultural community. Thus, the crime thrives as a lucrative business as it is consistently made possible by these social conditions.

Types of Hostage-Taking and Kidnapping

Over the ages and world-over, several forms of abduction of humans have been recorded. Their typologies are because of the operative models of the abductors, the aims and reasons for the abduction, the societal value-system, mindset and zeitgeist of the event, amongst other numerous factors. However, the most universally known types of hostage-taking and kidnapping include:

Basic Kidnapping: This is the commonest type of kidnapping. It is accomplished in most parts of the world with minimal preparation, with relative low risk of failure. In this typology, abductors usually target local businessmen or their family members; the affluent of the society who they consider as being 'well-off', without having sufficient resources to spend a great deal of money on security precautions. The kidnapper's goal is a fast, easy payoff. Generally, the ransoms requested are relatively easy for the victim's family or company to obtain.

Express Kidnapping: In this form of kidnapping, the victim is abducted, then forced to withdraw their own ransom from a bank or ATM. If all goes well, the victim is released afterwards, generally after having been relieved of all valuables on their person (and occasionally in their residence). This type of kidnapping is popular in urban areas, due to the prolific ATMs. In some cases, this will develop into a standard kidnapping, with further ransom demanded of the family or employer. In other cases, the abducted victim is held overnight, to get around a one-day withdrawal limit. The abduction of the former Anambra State Governor, Dr Chris Ngige, in 2004 with a political intent of him signing a resignation document, is an example of express kidnapping.

Political Kidnapping: This involves any abduction incident conducted to extort political concessions from governments or security forces. As monetary ransom is no longer enough, it is more difficult to negotiate abducted victim's freedom as in many cases the political concessions or demands can not be met by the involved government, thereby putting the victim's life at greater risk.

Tiger Kidnapping: This abduction model involves a hostage-taking in order to force the victim to participate in a robbery. The robberies have become known as tiger kidnappings because the raiders stalk their prey to study their movements before striking. The term was first used in the United Kingdom for crime against immigrants, (mostly illegal immigrants) from China and the Middle East, who were kidnapped by armed gangs; who then threatened their families back home with the death of the victim if ransom would not be paid**.**

Bride Kidnapping: This is a form of abduction for forced-marriage. It is a form of cultural antic to force a damsel to marriage. In this act, the groom-to-be kidnaps his bride. In many cases the would-be couple has never met until

the day of the abduction. This way of marriage is practiced in the Caucasus region, Central Asia, and some nations in Africa- For instances, in Yoruba land (as Prof Wole Soyinka revealed in his drama, *The Lion and the Jewel*) and in some parts of the old customary Igboland. In many cases, the bride is raped in order to convince her to stay with her husband, as in many traditional cultures the loss of virginity is harshly judged. In some cultures a bride price is customary as compensation by the abductor to his victim's family.

Virtual Kidnapping: This is more of a scam than an actual kidnapping. The perpetrators will wait until their target is unreachable (visiting an area with no cellular coverage, for example), then will contact the target's family or company, claiming they have kidnapped the person and demanding an immediate ransom. The target will eventually return; unaware that anything untoward has occurred. Due to the need for haste, the ransoms demanded are generally relatively modest. Another common technique is to call the target pretending to be a cellular phone company representative, and ask them to turn off their phone for a short while for a technical reason, during which the virtual kidnapping is conducted. Thus far, virtual kidnappings are most common in Latin America, specifically Argentina, Brazil, Colombia, and Mexico.

High Net-Worth Individual Kidnapping: This is the most cinematically popular form of kidnapping. Generally, the intended target is studied for some time prior to the actual abduction, allowing the perpetrators to gather intelligence on security procedures and personal habits. After the victim has been taken, their family or employer is contacted to pay ransom for the victim's freedom. A negotiation process occurs in this process, as most of these incidents are perpetrated by experienced kidnapping gangs. The victim is by and large released if ransom is paid. As high-net-worth folks become more and more security-conscious, this type of kidnapping has been on the decline in recent years, in favour of less involved kidnappings with smaller but easier to obtain payoffs.

Effects of Hostage-Taking and Kidnapping in the Society

Hostage-taking and kidnapping has several effects in the society: Either to the victim and the affected family, company, relatives, etc, or to the society at large of which the government of the day and its security agencies are involved. The major effects are:

- **Psychological Effects:** Kidnapping has great psychological effects, and it is on the efficiency of the psychological trauma that the kidnapper's intentions are realized. These psychological effects include the torture (and emotional or sentient experiences the victim passes through), panic of the family of the victim (over the possible loss of life of the victim and telepathic trauma that the two separated segments of the family or company feel together). It also creates tension, fear and anxiety in the lives of the victim, company, co-workers and family. Kidnapping traumatises both the victim and their relatives or family. Sometimes even after the release, the trauma impinges on their efficiency in job areas, business, etc, which affects the economy of the State. In certain situations, rape and other cognate crimes and their traumatic experiences follow kidnapping incidents, especially in cases of female victims. Because of the reality of the *insider collaborator*, most abducted victims and their families cast mistrustful and suspicious eyes on their relatives as informants, who *in se* are depraved co-workers, kinsmen, citizens or neighbours. It also makes people to loose confidence and trust in their government; being afraid of what is happening, and thus feel un-secure and distrust in the leadership of the society.

- **Economic Effects:** The major intention of most abduction incidents is the extortion money. This intention is achieved through psychological pressures that include threatening the family or company of the victim to pay the ransom or loose the abducted one. These demands are always in millions of Naira, of which after payment the company or family falls back to abject poverty; often with great debts from sources where the paid amount was made up. The *Source Magazine* in 2010 gathered a list of outstanding kidnapping incident in Nigeria. The list (*Source Magazine,* July 26, 2010; pp 14-20) showed that at least 90% of the victims of kidnapping incidents are of the upper class stratum of the society or relatives of such calibre of people. It thus becomes a strategic punishment intended to pull down the wealthy of the society. Most of these victims end up closing their accounts, selling off their properties, etc, in order to ensure the safety and freedom of their relative endangered in the incident by paying the demanded ransom. At the end of the experience, which is likened to parturition, the victim thanks God for their regained freedom and also sulks over the financial drought that the event brought to their life, which in turn becomes psychological. It debases the victim, bringing them down to the realm of priced-worth wherein life assurance depends on the ability to pay the ransom and at the stipulated condition, even though in some cases after the ransom has been paid, the victim is killed as well.

- **Social Effects:** Abduction has some social effects. It causes panic, tension, feelings of insecurity and weakens citizens' confidence in the government and the political leadership of the State. In cases of 'hostage-taking' for reasons of revenge, punishment or sexual exploitation, the social effects affect the health and nature of the victim. Consequently, abduction often leads to severe injuries, numerous deaths (thus decimating the population of the society and distorting the labour force), and loss of properties and frustrates development; as a consequence, it affects or breaks the societal linkages. It ensures societal unrest and therein makes it obvious to all citizens that there is no social harmony in the society.

- **Political Effects:** Kidnapping also has political effects in the society. It makes the government spend a lot of time and money in crime combats; ensuring its citizens of the safety of their lives and properties. In the security domain, kidnapping alters the societal leadership priorities. Instead of deploying security personnel to their statutory functions, they are instead sent after kidnappers and often this alters the already made budget of the State; compelling the State to change its focus and security budget. In the international domain, it scares foreigners from entering into a country or State either as tourists or investors, which has effects on the socio-economic growth of the society. It paints the State black before the international community, and compels citizens abroad not to attempt returning home if they love their lives. This like the effects on foreigners denies the State of its elites in Diaspora from coming down home to help build their polity.

Reasons and Development of the Crime in the South-Eastern Nigeria

Hostage-taking and kidnapping poses serious threat to the stability of the socio-political and economic life of Nigeria, and as such, creates strong challenges to the Nigerian community. These challenges receive support from the societal value-system and mindset on fraternity and citizenry. The value-system of the South-Eastern part of Nigeria seems to shore up the concept of respect and valuation of quality existence and survival, and attaches these to money-making, irrespective of the modalities of its amassment. Based on these realities, the concept of '*our illustrious son*' has no ethical standard and every form of human endeavour that fetches quick and substantial money is considered as '*business,*'

ipso facto that business is hustled outside their vicinity. To this effect, the citizens see the divulging of information on their illustrious son who is notorious in his business as an act of community sabotage and depravity.

Another reason why the crime thrives in the South-Eastern Nigeria is because of the crime-culture and its metamorphoses. As a cultural abstract entity, crime has value-systems, customs and beliefs, ways of life, attitudes, etc. These form the fundamentals for criminal morale, impetus and strategies. This culture is in two perspectives: As a way of life and as metamorphosis. As a people's way of life, crime culture imitates all the aspects and features of the human culture, and being itself a deviated generation of the social systems and values of the society. Crime culture herein becomes a strong determiner in the development and mutation of peculiar crimes. The more sophisticated and organised it is, the more it metamorphoses, develops and expands. As a result of this, cultural values-engendered crimes often end up in organised crimes and in the formation of operational webs in the crime linkage. Ugwulebo (2011:10) noted that 'more often than not, organised crimes involve different gradations of professional criminals who play one role or the other in the enterprise to ensure its security, safety and continuity in business.'

This criminal culture's metamorphosis is determined by the type of social and value systems operational in the society and these societal value systems and mechanisms typify and localize the crime circumstances and events. Thus the thriving and peculiarity of hostage-taking and kidnapping in the South-Eastern Nigeria is possible because of the prevailing socio-economic activities in it, the topography of the area (that the criminals themselves spend time to survey and study during crime-incubation in order to master and dominion over it), the pedigree and structure of insecurity and safety-consciousness of the area, as well as the security agents and human community's readiness to onslaught and blitz miscreants in their mist. The criminals study the society and its security agents, especially the Nigeria Police Force. The more studies for survival and continuity of business that criminals make from the background of the expressed societal mentality when ravaged, the more sophisticated and advanced their crime cultural metamorphosis gets stringer. This advancement of crime metamorphosis consequently results in *syndicalism* of the crime enterprise, which poses great challenge to the Nigeria Police Force.

Therefore, crime peculiarities, its spate and speed, such as hostage-taking and kidnapping in the South-Eastern Nigeria is primarily adverse affects that proceed from the societal value-system. Crimes and their sorts vary in tandem with the human community's mode of life and mindset of survival as well as the sophistication of a value system. This value system may be of the primary society or the secondary (influencing cultural) community. The more a value system has interconnections within the valuating standards, the more complicated proceeding crimes from the society become, and these also pose great challenges to the Nigeria Police Force.

Investigations, security reports and crime-watch have proven that an excellent percentage of hostage-taking and kidnapping incidents in the South-Eastern part of Nigeria were never sponsored (but are till date conceived by the criminals as hustling and "business," and mostly executed by armed robbers), except in rare cases where their objectives were for assassination. However, hostage-taking and in kidnapping became a serious business, so lucrative for the criminals, and its spate increased daily as amounts spent for ransoms go swiftly like wildfire round the component states and their neighbouring states, and the psychological conation of having made it in a short and in simple venture, triggers others to join the business and being poised, more criminals endear into it for quick money making.

Challenges in Combating Hostage-Taking and Kidnapping in Nigeria

It is from this backdrop of the reasons mentioned above that the greater challenges of hostage-taking and kidnapping could be x-rayed. The most obvious challenges that the Police and other law enforcement agencies in the country face in combating hostage-taking and kidnapping include:

- Lack of adequate information to the security agents by citizens when kidnapping incidents take place or when kidnapers have hideouts in their vicinities.

- Another major horrible challenge facing the Nigeria Police Force is the failure of intelligence: That inability to identify, infiltrate, recruit and gather actionable intelligence. Operational intelligence is a necessary condition for accurate onslaught against abductors in Nigeria in general and the South-East in particular. Nosa James-Igbinadolor remarked that 'Intelligence work is serious work, it is strategic in nature, requiring long-term investment including keeping sleeper agents in place for years. This intelligence gathering is physically, emotionally and intellectually demanding, requiring self-service, discipline of the mind and utmost dedication from operational Commanders and agent handlers'. (*Daily Sun*; Wednesday, June 29, 2011:20). According to a Police expert in crime onslaught strategy, Solomon Arase (2010: IX), modern policing is unarguably, intellectually-driven. This is because of the combined factors of globalisation, technological advancement, increasing dynamics of crime, etc., which necessitate the emergence of novel policing concepts that aim at achieving its statutory mandate within the ambits of the law.

- The third major challenge is the lack of sophisticated equipments for tracking down criminals. The Nigeria Police Force lacks modern trackers that aid in fast and accurate investigations in hostage-taking and kidnapping incidents. The former Inspector-General of Police, Mr. Hafiz Ringim, once had this realistic confession that: 'The Police had to contend with a number of challenges ranging from inadequate logistic support and manpower'. Thus, confronted with lack of motivation and low morale aggravated by neglect of the Force by successive governments, the Nigerian Police appears somewhat incapacitated in fending off onslaught of all sorts from high-class criminals whose sophisticated arms most times overwhelm those carried by the Police. *(The Source Magazine*; July 10, 2006:15). This leadership confession is similar to the opinion of the former Governor of Abia State, Dr Orji Uzor Kalu, who held that such peculiar crimes as hostage-taking and kidnapping are in the increase in (some parts of) the country because of the poor state of equipment that the Police use in crime fighting and the protection of the citizens and their properties. (*Saturday Sun*; March 24, 2012:71). The Force is poorly equipped. Some of the ammunitions in the various armouries of the Police are outdated, disused and obsolete. They cannot match the sophisticated weapons wielded by the dare-devil robbers that torment innocent citizens endlessly. These mitigate the *operational capacity* and *image* of the Nigeria Police Force and thus become a serious challenge in the fight against organised crimes as hostage-taking and kidnapping.

- Nigeria as a populous country lacks proper recording of births, deaths and migrations of its in habitants and citizens. To this effect, the country lacks digitalized and interconnected authentic identification models in which information about every citizen and inhabitant could be assessed. This inefficiency of population management makes syndication by criminals easy and onslaught tedious for the Police.

- The indisposition of network providers in giving information about their network users who use their telephone lines in every hostage-taking and kidnapping incident to transact the business that initiates and ensures the payment of the ransom demanded for the release of their victim.

- Porous border surveillance and control, which results in the transportation and proliferation of sophisticated arms and ammunitions in the State that out-powers those used by the security agents to combat the crime.

- Insider or collaborator's factor of some scrupulous elements in the Nigeria Police Force and other security agencies, multinational companies, banks and bureaus of finance, which makes information easily accessible for the criminals and also makes crime investigation and tracking complicated.

- Crimes and social disorder peculiarities of an area, of a region or geographical location, are another set of challenges facing the Nigeria Police in the combat of abduction in the South-Eastern Nigeria. The social disorders are aspects of rules of social interactions of the society that the ethno-methodologist and social actor Police has to uncover immediately he resumes office after posting or transfer. This becomes a challenge because, besides the genetic claims of criminality as hereditary, it has as well both psychological and socio-cultural traits that deeper analyses and investigations of crime incidents unveil their reliance and provenance from the cultural mindset, value system, paradigm shifts, etc, of the cultural community in question, which are the components of its social environment that nurtures inherited criminal traits.

The Nigeria Police: Mitigating Abduction in the South-Eastern Nigeria

According to the Section 214 of the 1999, the Nigerian Police was set up as the only Police Force for the Country. By statutory provisions (of Section 4 of the Police Act Cap. 359 LFN 1990), to it is assigned various duties and roles the most important of which is the protection of lives and property, which hostage-taking and kidnapping threatens. From this arises the duty of crime prevention, its investigation and prosecution in court. The Force has a significant role to play in checking criminal activities in the country.

This statutory provision notwithstanding has not held water in its realization. It is in line with this slackness that the *Statesman Editorial* once noted that, 'whatever the case may be, apart from few cases of gallantry, the Police and security agencies have responded poorly to the scourge (crimes in South East, notably bank robberies and kidnappings). Indeed, it seems as if there is no Police in the land whereas, in most cases, these heinous activities happen within metres of Police Stations. All the handicaps of the Police and excuses in this world will not stop the next robbery or kidnap. What will is a strategic response by the Police, a new approach to policing'. It further noted that the first response from the Police High Command was 'to introduce those ugly roadblocks to the South East, which are mere tollgates. This is the unintelligent answer to the problem. We have had cases where robbers stop at such checkpoints and massacre the officers' that they found to be sitting ducks. The *Statesman Editorial* suggests that, 'a more preventive approach, increased undercover activities and working with all the stakeholders like the community vigilance groups, etc, to identify the hoodlums in our midst. The bad guys are actually easy to identify especially for the trained eyes of detectives'. (*Statesman*; July 16-22, 2009:9).

Similarly, by means of combating such peculiar crimes and devising solvent strategies out of the log-jam of hostage-taking and kidnapping in South-East Nigeria, the former Inspector-General of Police, Sir Mike Okiro, in July 2009

ordered the Police Chiefs in the Southeast zone to a close-door meeting with the AIG Zone 9 (Umuahia), which ended with his ordering the Commissioners of Police of Abia, Imo, Enugu and Anambra States to be ruthless in dealing with the situation and to devise stern measures to stem the rising trend in kidnapping in the South East of Nigeria.

Based on all that has been discussed so far, it is evident that a Police officer posted to a new place of assignment (such as in the South-East) must first study the social environment; uncover the rules of social interactions of the society: How the members of the very society negotiate new social order and values. By so doing, the officer undergoes a psychological orientation, training and rehabilitation that is constantly censured by the general functional ideals of the Force. What this further entails is orientation: Socially, culturally and psychologically. This will help the Force in facing up to the mounting challenges that organised crimes as hostage-taking and kidnapping pose to the Nigeria Police and to Nigeria as a country.

The stress in these challenges therefore is on the nature, construction and execution of the regular techniques to be used by the Police as a social actor, in order to understand and match fittingly to the challenges of security and order in the given society where one is posted. Active policing is action packed, and only real actors in the field attain efficient delivery and plausible results. Attainment of this activeness is possible when the Police as social actors negotiate relativised roles in the new environment they are serving and partaking in order to create that safety-security-peace-ordered living, as well as render their behaviour accountable and imitable to others in the collectivist functional perspective of the Nigerian Police Force.

Because crime peculiarities are ethnographic, deviant behaviours that the society abhors and imposes sanctions on, tend to generate smarter methods that make for professionalism (and specializations). The criminals' operational strategies change speedily for reasons of ensuring continuity of subsistence and operations. Like the social changes, the speed of change in peculiar crimes such as hostage-taking and kidnapping in the South Eastern Nigeria vary from glacial (or redundant and cold operational approach) to mercurial (unexpected reactions and changes), and this varying speed of alterations becomes as well variations in the rules of social interactions in the society, which the Police as a social actor negotiates new social order and values as well as invent modes of subsistence and survival, efficiency and fitness in service delivery.

CONCLUSIONS

A critical reflection on the series of peculiar crimes in the South-Eastern Nigeria or the Igbo States since the inception of the 4th Republic (1999 till date), especially since 2005, shows both universality of crime type and same spate and speed of crimes. Evidently, from the discourse so far, they are testimonies of the zeitgeist's paradigm (value) shifts or valuation of life and means of its amelioration. This is because universal social values and values system within a race is tantamount to objectivity in crime typology, although intercultural influences could bring some alterations based on the sort of influences and cultural values the neighbouring states may send across.

Consequently, it is suggestive that for the Nigeria Police Force to be effective and up to the challenges posed to it by organised crimes in the country, which are often peculiar to some parts of the nation, Nigeria must ensure that:

- There should be enhanced technological recording of Nigerian citizens (through National and Voters ID Cards, driver's licence, international passports, etc), which can be connected to a person's SIM card, utility bill accounts,

etc. By this, kidnappers will be easily tracked down, with the collaborations of both the service providers and agencies that issued the digitalised identity cards. These national agencies would provide clues about the criminals' biological data as well geographical location of their hideouts easily and promptly for identification, which entails speedy crime combat.

- The provision of advanced tracking technological gadgets and surveillance monitoring equipments for investigating the whereabouts of victims and their assailers' hideouts.

- There exists impermeable border surveillance and control, which would culminate in controlling the excessive transportation and proliferation of sophisticated arms and ammunitions in the State, which the hoodlums operate with and therewith out-powers the security agents who use anachronistic arms to combat criminals with sophisticated firearms.

- The State promulgates laws that would deal decisively with harbourers of thick and ancestral forests or residential areas that are completely covered by trees that make visibility of the houses impossible, as well as abandonment of buildings, rendering them uncompleted buildings, and thus abode for criminals. These forests and uncompleted buildings are the normal den of rubbers and hideouts of kidnappers. Once a State promulgates a law, stipulates sanctions, and dictates conditions for forests and buildings' abandonment, kidnappers will find it difficult to have confident abodes.

- The State promulgates a cognate law against buildings which rightful owners are not around, and which are left in the hands of caretakers who in certain cases connive with kidnappers and convert the building left in their custody to hideouts for kidnappers.

These and many more will certain mitigate furtherance in the crime. No one solution should be adjudged sufficient for preventing this crime. As Opara A.I. and Nkwocha D.I. (2011:131) rightly observed, 'crime prevention cuts across the frame-work of ideology and rudiments of social economic and political provisions capable of advancing life.' This is because, it aims at reducing victimization, minimises crime and the number of criminals.

REFERENCES

1. Arase, E.S (Ed.). (2010). *Monograph on Criminal Investigation*. Abuja: Lawlords Publications.

2. *Daily Sun*; Wednesday, June 29, 2011.

3. *Saturday Sun*; March 24, 2012.

4. *Source Magazine,* July 26, 2010.

5. *Statesman*; July 16-22, 2009.

6. Opara, A.I. and Nkwocha, D.I. (2011). *Criminology and Victimology*. Owerri: Mercy Divine Publishers.

7. Ugwulebo E.O. (2011). *Kidnapping in Nigeria*. Owerri: Cel-Bez Publishing Co. Ltd.

8. The Nigeria Police Force Doc for British Embassy.