



Vigilantism and its Implications on Nigeria's National Security: A Case Study of Anambra Vigilante Group (A.V.G), 1998-2020

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Abstract. A lot has been written on the security challenges facing Nigeria as a country and the lapses of the Nigeria Police in providing adequate security. These security lapses made some state governors to inaugurate quasi police outfits with different nomenclature to complement the activities of the police; yet, there is a vehement opposition for the establishment of a state owned police in Nigeria. One of the reasons often adduced for this opposition is that some state governors might use the state police to manhandle their oppositions. Extant works so far on this issue have neither adequately investigated the activities of these state and community created police outfits, nor have they comprehensively assessed the security implications of such groups to Nigeria's national security. This study therefore, is an examination of vigilantism in Anambra State of Nigeria, using one of these community created security outfits, the Anambra Vigilante Group (A.V.G). The paper argues that state and community created security groups like the AVG are already performing the anticipated functions of state police. From the findings of the study, there is no gainsaying that quasi police outfits such as AVG, have contributed immensely in ameliorating security challenges in Anambra State in particular and Nigeria at large; however, there are some challenges and security implications that come with the existence of an informal security outfit like the AVG. Using both primary and secondary sources of data generated from field research, the study employs both qualitative and quantitative methods of historical research.

Keywords: Vigilantism, Security, National Security, Anambra Vigilante Group

1. Introduction

Anambra State is located in the South-Eastern part of Nigeria and, since Nigeria's independence in 1960, different security threats have continued to plague the internal security of the country as a nation. Such threats emanate from within the country and endanger its cohesion and wellbeing as nation state. Such threats include kidnapping, rape, murder, theft, armed robbery, *etcetera*. This does not suggest that colonial Nigeria was devoid of violent crises or crimes. There were cases of criminal activities within the colonial entity during colonialism in Nigeria. This was why apart from the colonial police, there were also quasi police outfits established by the colonialists like the tax collectors who also served as enforcers of tax laws and as well, punished tax offenders. Same was the case with court men who as well served as law enforcement agents in colonial Nigeria. Nonetheless, since the emergence of Nigeria as a nation-state and the concomitant establishment of the Nigeria Police Force, these quasi police outfits became outlawed as their activities were taken over by the police.

In today's Nigeria, internal security is within the constitutional purview of the Nigeria Police Force. As O. E Tangban puts it, "no society exists without a mechanism for the maintenance of law and order" and in most cases, that mechanism is principally the Police. However, despite the existence of the police in Nigeria today, insecurity has continued to rise. The inability of the police to manage the insecurity in Nigeria has been linked to a lot of factors. Mention has been made about the difficulty in policing a large landmass of about 924,000 square kilometres populated by over a two hundred nationalities with diverse cultures and background. Other factors have

been listed as lack of manpower, inadequate funding which has birthed inadequate logistics, arms and ammunition, uniform and accoutrement, communication and transportation facilities. Many scholars have also pointed out corruption as the major reason for the inability of the police to fight insecurity in Nigeria. Quoting Afrobarometer report of 2016, Ikoh records that about three quarters (75%) of the Nigeria Police personnel are corrupt and this situation is not getting any better. Although some may argue that there is endemic corruption in all segments of Nigeria, the fact remains that corruption in the police may be seen to be the most unpardonable and objectionable because, it is their occupational responsibility to prevent and work towards eliminating it.

Following the rise in security challenges in the country, different security agencies in the form of quasi police outfits began to re-emerge in different parts of the country as communities started resorting to traditional policing by rational choice; and with time, informal policing received a strong backing and support from the local people. In fact, some of these quasi-police outfits, at some point, became well recognised by the government as they complement the efforts of the Police. Although later plagued and bugged down by a lot of illegalities and shoddy businesses, the initial support given to the *Bakkasi* Boys by the government and the people, showed the efficacy of this security outfit in its early days. Currently, the vigilante group in Anambra state is a very vibrant example of the quasi-police outfits in Nigeria with success stories in the security sector of the state.

Similar success stories have been obtained in other areas where “many urban poor depend on a wide range of informal policing structures (Neighbourhood Watches, Community Guards, and Vigilantes) for the delivery of a measure of safety and security”. The case of Kaduna has not been far from impressive since the Kaduna State House of Assembly passed the State Vigilante Service Law on the 6th of June 2016. In areas such as the Calabar Metropolis where vigilantes operate, and Lagos, where the Neighbourhood Crime Watch Operated, there was an observed healthy co-operation between these informal policing structures and the Nigeria Police Force. These quasi police outfits reportedly caught criminals, handed them over to the police, and shared vital security information with the police. In fact, the involvement of the O’odua People’s Congress (OPC) in the policing of some parts of Lagos State was said to have improved commercial activity in Oshodi and its environs.

Again, despite the controversies confronting its establishment, the gradual rise of the South-West Security outfit known as *Amotekun* is also another example of the sprouting of such quasi-police outfits in Nigeria. Presently, a similar security outfit is taking shape in the South-South region of Nigeria to provide security for the people of the South-South region. A similar development is seen in to be gradually unfolding in the South-East of Nigeria with an unconventional security outfit called the Eastern Security Network, formed by the controversial Biafran Leader, Mazi Nnamdi Kanu. Also, some like the Civilian Joint Task Force (CJTF) in the North-Eastern part even have the full recognition and backing of the Federal government.

All these are only a consequence of the rise in insecurity in Nigeria which has made some Nigerians to begin to clamour for state police while others oppose it. What one may ask is why some of these quasi police outfits, which almost function as state police, would get the backing of not just the state governments, but also that of the Federal government, yet state owned police remains unrecognised in Nigeria? The answer may be tied to the fact that, while it is true that the activities of these quasi police outfits have contributed in ameliorating security challenges in the country, they also constitute security challenges in their own ways. Employing both primary and secondary sources of data, this study investigates vigilantism in Anambra state by assessing the activities of the Anambra State Vigilante Group (A.V.G); with a view to explicating that despite the opposition against state police in Nigeria, the activities of these quasi-police outfits are tantamount to that of a state police.

1.1 Security in Pre-Colonial Igboland

Prior to the advent of the British colonial administration, the geographical location today referred to as Nigeria was made up of different independent political entities who had both differences and some similarities in their social, political, economic and cultural organisation. In some centralised polities like the Old Oyo, Borno Empire, Sokoto Caliphate, and Benin Kingdom, *etcetera*, power was concentrated in the hands of one or few persons. However, in decentralised polities like the Igbo, Ijaw and Ibibio, power and authority were vested in the community, clan chiefs or title holders.

However, before the emergence of Colonial Police that metamorphosed into the Nigeria Police Force, different communities that made up the entity called Nigeria today also had crimes and criminals. As

rightly observed by Onyeozili and Ebbe, deviance is a ubiquitous phenomenon found in every healthy society of the world; and as such there were customary standards in such societies and negative sanctions for any breach of these standards. Consequently, there were as well, various socio-political organisations that in turn, performed security functions in such societies. Their functions and activities were somehow similar to the activities of the Nigeria Police of today. In Igboland which is the geographical location of this study, security was managed by different groups. Traditionally, Igboland (which Anambra State is part of) lies between the Niger and the Cross River, although there are Igbo people who live on the West of the Niger.

Although security was diversified and handled by different groups, pre-colonial Igbo people made conscious efforts to establish some level of sanity and crime prevention mechanism through the teaching of their children the norms, the do's and the don'ts of the society. Due to high spiritualism in pre-colonial Igboland too, it was believed that negative acts had spiritual implications and so, "members were expected to desist from offences that might incur the displeasure of the living or dead members of the lineage or village". This went a long way in doing half of the security job for them because this inculcated good morals in most individuals of that period.

Physically too, structures were put up to create a sense of security in many Igbo societies. Isichei has observed that Igbo communities which experienced regular raids during the slave period put some structures in place to protect themselves. Some of these structures were moats with removable bridges, high earthen walls and concealed pits filled with stakes for defence. In Awka area which is in present Anambra State, constructed defensive towers of about thirty feet high were found.

For the enforcement of the physical security in pre-colonial Igboland, different groups including the age-grade associations, the masquerade cults, *dibia* fraternities (medicine men), titled elders (*Nze na Ozo* group), *etcetera*, all participated in the enforcement. Among these different groups who were involved in the physical security of pre-colonial Igboland, the young age grade associations were the most prominent in the aspect of enforcement. These young age grade associations were formed by youthful members between the ages of 18 and 45 years, and for this reason, they performed the most herculean tasks in the society. They functioned as task force, assisted creditors to recover debts, and most

importantly, they functioned as constabulary force to enforce law and order formulated by the elders. Sometimes too, they functioned as a pressure group influencing the passing of new laws that helped in the guarding of public morality.

Similarly, the masquerade cult as an enforcer of laws and a pillar of security in pre-colonial Igboland was also propelled by the members of the young age grade associations. These youths in masquerades, enforced laws and secured the society from possible disturbance. Any property in dispute was barricaded with sprouting palm fronds (*omu*) by masquerades and the conflicting parties would never go there again till the case was settled by the council of elders. Masquerades also functioned as watchnights for possible criminals who went around looking for items to steal. Masquerades as well escorted individuals who had committed abominable acts, out of the community where the acts were committed.

The *Nze na Ozo* group (title holders) was another group that contributed immensely to the security of pre-colonial Igboland. However, their role was more of parliamentary because they concentrated on law making, while the enforcement was done by the other groups like the masquerade cult and the age grade associations. The *Nze na Ozo* group was reputed to be truthful and upright, so, their decisions were mostly taken as final. They performed judicial functions too and mitigated in criminal cases like robbery, rape, murder and gave the final verdict. They decided how wrong deeds would be corrected, either by payment of fine, banishment or spiritual cleansing known as '*ikpu alu*'.

Also, in pre-colonial Igboland, the women group known as the *Umuokpu* also contributed their own quota to the security architecture of pre-colonial Igboland. They made sure there was peace between married spouses especially their brothers and their wives. If any issue arose, the *Umuokpu* group invited the spouses and counselled them. This group also made sure all punishment fines are paid even in death. In burial ceremonies, they secured the burial rites and tradition of the people by making sure all traditional regulations are met by the family of the deceased.

Apart from these dimensions to security in pre-colonial Igboland, there was also the spiritual angle to it. As earlier stated, the Igbo in the pre-colonial period were very spiritual and connected almost everything to the divine. In the security sector too, the pre-colonial Igbo people used some spiritual means like oath taking, covenants and laying of curses to ensure security of lives and property. This

was the field of the *dibia* (diviners and medicine men) who guided the people on how best to explore this spiritual option. Some of the deities were invoked by these spiritual specialists to protect lives and property of the people, such that anyone who went against the deities' protection suffered various degrees of blemishes ranging from physical to spiritual torments including mental ailments.

2. Anambra State Vigilante Group (A.V.G)

2.1 Origin

Originally, traditional vigilantism in Igboland has always represented popular struggles for justice and accountability as a reaction to criminality, insecurity, deprivation and general social disorder in the society. Hence, vigilantism in Anambra State was originally not interested in legal guilt but was committed to punishing individuals believed to be guilty of crimes like armed robbers, kidnappers, rapists, burglars or accomplices to these criminals. It was a common belief that these individuals were a common enemy of the society as they damaged the social ties and communal bonds that bound the community together. However, the gross institutional failure engendered by political manipulations and corrupt practices of leaders since the end of the Nigerian Civil War in 1970 engendered a wave of insecurity in Nigeria and paved way for the modern vigilantism in parts of Nigeria including Anambra State of South-Eastern Nigeria. Commenting on the effect of this institutional failure, Anadi argues that "the result was that many communities and villages were left to struggle for basic services as well as physical security, and they recourse to informal systems of law enforcement with a commitment to an anti-crime mandate".

This was why during the military regimes in Nigeria, many communities of Anambra State had some sort of watchnight men who were locally known as 'Ndinche'. These men were village volunteer guards who arrested suspected criminals and handed them over to the village council who first punished them by presenting them to the general public in their shame before handing them over to the police. Although this brand of vigilante guards were mostly unarmed, however, towards the 1980s and 90s, military regimes of those days established anti-crime squads that comprised of the police, the military and well-armed vigilante guards. Hence, the tradition of arming vigilante guards may be said to had been institutionalised by military regimes in Nigeria.

The origin of what may be considered modern vigilantism in Anambra State is traced back to the late 1990s during the time of the Onitsha Traders' Association popularly known as OTA. This group emanated in September 1999 as a result of rising cases of armed robbery in the Onitsha Market area of Anambra state. It was obvious that there was an urgent need for improved security measures, but the police could not help the situation; so, the OTA group stepped up and functioned as a vigilante group that was bent on curbing crime in the Onitsha area of Anambra State. However, the mode of operation of the OTA group was very cruel in its method of justice and law enforcement, especially with the gruesome ways of killing alleged criminals without proper trials in a court of law. The group was accused of torture, unlawful detention, degrading and inhumane treatment of alleged criminals, *etcetera*. In fact, the OTA was said to had summarily executed about 1,500 people between September 1999 and July 2000.

During this golden age of the OTA in Anambra, the *Bakassi* Boys in Aba area of Abia State which started their operation in 1998 were also operating as a vigilante group in Abia State. Soon enough, they secured the backing of the state government and were designated as the Abia State Vigilante Service (AVS). The group was formed by a group of traders to confront criminal gangs who called themselves 'Mafians'. The 'Mafs' (as they were popularly called) grossly disturbed the businesses of these traders and made their lives miserable, such that many traders, buyers and investors left Aba for these criminals. The Abba *Bakassi*, led by Ariaria Market shoe makers in Aba recorded great successes within the shortest possible time. They were able to rid Aba of these criminal gangs between 1998 and 2000. Their methods were also similar to that of OTA in Anambra State but were said to be more gruesome. Amnesty International reported that members of this group tortured 10 suspected criminals to death on the 25th of January 2002.

However, with the popular successes of the Abia State *Bakassi*, many residents in neighbouring Anambra and Imo states began to clamour for an extension of the Aba brand of vigilante (the *Bakassi* Boys) to their states. Then, with the deteriorating efficacy of the OTA in crime fighting in Anambra State, another vigilante group known as the *Bakassi* Boys of Anambra State emerged with the same methods of operation as the variant in Aba, Abia State. Initially, the government of the day refused to officially recognise this group but along the line, a bill sanctioning the group was introduced to the

Anambra State House of Assembly in August 2000. After the governor, Dr Chinwoke Mbadinuju signed this bill on December 6, 2000, it became known as the 'Anambra State Vigilante Service (AVS) Act No. 9, 2000'. With this development, the Anambra *Bakassi* Boys became known as the Anambra Vigilante Service (AVS) and this AVS gained state backing with provisions of office space, vehicles and salaries for its members, all coming from the state government.

However, with such powers, the activities of the *Bakassi* Boys in Anambra (AVS) soon began to go out of control. A human rights organisation in Nigeria known as Civil Liberties Organisation (CLO) recorded that between April 2000 and January 2002, the AVS had in extrajudicial ways, executed over 2000 people in a gruesome manner; while thousands of individuals had received inhumane, cruel and degrading treatment including torture from members of the AVS, the Anambra *Bakassi* Boys. The situation got so bad that the government of the day led by Governor Mbadinuju tried to curtail their excesses by imposing a code of conduct on the members of the AVS, compelling them to hand over all their suspects to the Police for further actions; but all was to no avail as the police said that the AVS had never handed over any of their apprehended suspects to the police.

At some point also, some of the activities of the formerly incorruptible heroes of the AVS, the *Bakassi* Boys indicated that they were gradually becoming corrupt and partisan. The Anambra *Bakassi* group was said to have murdered the former Chairman of Nnewi South Local Government Area, Chief Okonkwo, and the President of Nigeria Bar Association, Onitsha Branch, Mr. Barnabas Igwe, who were vocal critics of Mbadinuju's government at that time. Such compromise in their integrity and neutrality, coupled with other allegations of exploitations grossly smashed the public trust they previously enjoyed, and then exposed the group to possible proscription by the Federal government. Such excesses eventually led to the disbandment of the vigilantes including the Anambra AVS in 2002 by the Federal government; although many state governments including Anambra continued to covertly condone the activities of the *Bakassi* Boys up to 2003 and even up to 2004/2005. The disbandment came as a bill by President Olusegun Obasanjo on April 10, 2002 and was titled "Prohibition of Certain Association Act".

With the disbandment of the AVS, different communities of Anambra State started operating their

various vigilante groups independently, without the backing of the state government. Most of the communities established their vigilante groups using their community generated funds. This development was necessitated by the increase in crime rate in various communities of Anambra state in the early 2000s after the disbandment of the AVS. For the people of Anambra State, insecurity soared within this period such that rape, murder, burglary, armed robbery, theft, kidnapping, reckless shootings and mindless killings became the order of the day. In Abatete, a community in Idemili North Local Government Area (LGA) of Anambra State, criminal youths of different backgrounds organised themselves into groups of about 50 boys each and raided houses, robbed families and raped their female children or relatives. Such a scenario played out in the compound of Mr Gabriel's Compound in Nsukwu Abatete, where 3 females staying with Mr. Gabriel's mother were raped.

The experience in other parts of Nigeria was not entirely different from what was happening in communities of Anambra State. Enugu, Delta, Ebonyi and Edo were also in serious disaster. Lagos Festac Extension, where rich business men of Abatete origin lived, was also under siege of criminality, such that a very notable business mogul was shot and killed in a broad day light by some hoodlums. This helpless state of insecurity made a group of Abatete indigenes in Lagos Festac town, known as the Renaissance Group, to contribute huge sums of money running into millions of Naira to hire their own security. The men hired for this job were spiritually fortified men who hailed from Aguleri, Umuleri and parts of Abia State. Youths of Aguleri and Umuleri had just come out of a long lasting war between the two communities; and as Nwanegbo put it, "There were no food, no cloths and for many, no parents to guide them. They only have sophisticated arms and ammunition supplied, but not used up during the war. For them to eat, cloth and shelter (to an extent), they started using guns they had and still have, to get what they wanted". The effectiveness of this hired security group was immediately felt as they quickly brought down the spate of criminal attacks on the Abatete business men living in Lagos Festac town.

Although these business men had secured their security in the city, security situation at home was still a nightmare to Abatete indigenes living in Abatete, and those in the cities outside Abatete. Since this hired security structure worked for the Renaissance Group in Lagos, they thought it wise to replicate it in their hometown, Abatete. Hence, some

of the men in the security structure of the Renaissance Group in Lagos were detached and detailed to Abatete with some other hired men from other places to set up the Vigilante Group in Abatete. These men were financially funded by the Renaissance Group; the group also provided the security group with enough arms and ammunition and a patrol Hilux van. They were headed by Mr. Emeka Chidozie, popularly known as Emeka Bakassi who was a former member of the disbanded *Bakassi* group.

As earlier stated, the spate of insecurity was high everywhere; hence, a similar scenario played out in Ogidi, another Idemili community in Anambra State. Kidnapping was so rampant in Ogidi that prominent sons of Ogidi like the Okwuosa brothers became victims of this atrocious crime. Hence, as stated thus, 'Ogidi in particular was under a siege'. In the light of this, Ogidi villages began to set up pockets of vigilante groups managed by these villages until in the 1990s when Ogidi's emergent President General (PG) harmonised the groups into one. Similar was the case of other communities of Anambra State including the neighbouring Uke, Ideani Alor, Eziowelle, Abacha and Umuoji, *etcetera*, who also started operating their independent vigilante groups before the establishment of the state government-backed vigilante group, Anambra Vigilante Group. The first major attempt to harmonise all the community based vigilante groups was made under the administration of Dr Chris Nwabueze Ngige in 2003, as the governor of Anambra State. He made efforts to organise the various groups under one body and fund them to make them more effective. His efforts were said to had been laudable but the short-lived nature of his tenure in office killed his ambition for the vigilante groups in Anambra State. When the government of Mr. Peter Obi came into power, it took interest in the existence of the groups in 2008; so he donated vehicles to all the 179 communities of Anambra who by then, had a working vigilante group. Governor Obi as well, gave them grants of up to 3 to 5 million for the servicing and maintenance of the vehicles. Then, these various vigilante units of various Anambra communities were still identified with the former name of the *Bakassi* group, the Anambra Vigilante Services (AVS).

Later on, under the government of Governor Willie Obiano, the various vigilante groups in Anambra State was re-organised, harmonised and brought under one body known as the Anambra Vigilante Group. The reason for the choice of the word "Group" in place of the term "Service" in its new nomenclature may not be far from the need to

differentiate between the old and the new vigilante in Anambra State. However, many vigilante units and indigenes of Anambra State still use AVG and AVS interchangeably (see inscriptions on the red patrol van in plate 2). For the purpose of the legality of the AVG's existentiality, a legislative and legal backing was secured for the group. A law establishing the Anambra State Group Vigilante and its Supervisory Committees was enacted by the Anambra State House of Assembly in 2014, and this law came into force on the 11th day of February 2014. The law covers the establishment, funding, miscellaneous, functions and powers of the group and its supervisory committees. The law was later amended in 2015 and it came into force on the 13th day of October 2015. With this, the Anambra Vigilante Group (AVG) as a quasi-police outfit in Anambra State was born and vigilantism became a core part of security in Anambra State.

2.2 Structure

The organisation of the AVG is structured to cover the three senatorial zones, the 21 local governments and the 179 communities or towns in Anambra State. From the top, all activities of the AVG are overseen and coordinated by the Anambra State Vigilante Supervisory Committee (SVSC). This committee is made up of experienced experts in diverse fields of security. It is comprised of a Chairman, a Secretary/Legal Adviser who shall be a State Counsel from the Ministry of Justice, and other members. The chairman, appointed by the governor, must be an indigene of Anambra State. Other members of the committee include, the Special Adviser to the Governor on Security, the Chairman of the Anambra State House of Assembly Committee on Security, a representative of the Nigeria Police Force, a representative of State Security Services (SSS), a representative of National Security and Civil Defence Corp (NSCDC), a representative of the Traditional Institution, a representative of the Town Unions, a Community Liaison Officer who shall monitor the activities of the vigilante units to ensure compliance with the law, and any other member appointed by the Governor. The committee also houses 3 Co-ordinators representing the 3 senatorial zones in Anambra State, namely: Anambra North, Anambra South and Anambra Central.

Next on the lower line of duty are the Senior Zonal Supervisors. These Senior Zonal Supervisors also spread to cut across the 3 senatorial zones of Anambra State. For each senatorial zone in Anambra State, there are 2 Senior Zonal Supervisors for the effective discharge of duty by the AVG. The

selection of the Senior Zonal Supervisors is very carefully done as all the individuals occupying this position are individuals with cognate experience in the aspect of physical security. All the individuals selected for this position of Senior Zonal Supervisors are retired police officers at the rank of Assistant Commissioner of Police (ACP), Chief Superintendent of Police (CSP), Deputy Superintendent of Police (DSP) and Assistant Superintendent of Police (ASP), *etcetera*.

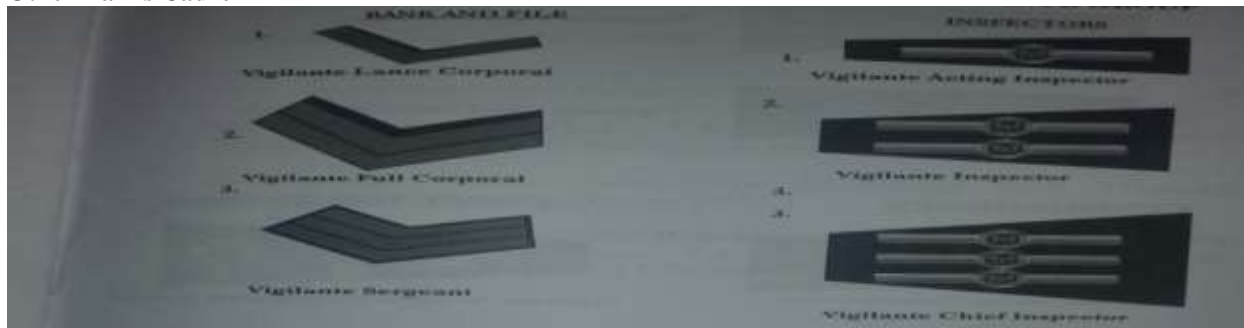
Directly under the Senior Zonal Supervisors are the Supervisors. There are only three Supervisors representing the three senatorial zones of Anambra State, directly reporting to the six Senior Zonal Supervisors. Directly under the Supervisors are the Town Vigilante Supervisory Committees. Every town or community in Anambra operating a vigilante unit has an established Town Vigilante Supervisory Committee. This committee is made up of a chairman and other members. The chairman of this committee is appointed by the State Vigilante Supervisory Committee, but subject to the Governor's approval. The chairman also, must have been resident in Anambra State for a continuous period of 30 years. Other members of the committee include, the Divisional Police Officer of the area, the President General of the Town Union, the Squad Leader of the Vigilante Unit in the town, and a representative of the town's Traditional Ruler.

Next, are the vigilante units in various 179 communities or towns of Anambra State. Each unit is headed by a Squad Leader who is either designated as Commander or Chief Security Officer (CSO). The

squad leader mostly does not go for field operations unless in critical cases, rather, operations are handle by the Second-in-Command of the Commander, popularly designated as the 2ic, and other operation leaders or zonal leaders, for communities that operate zones.

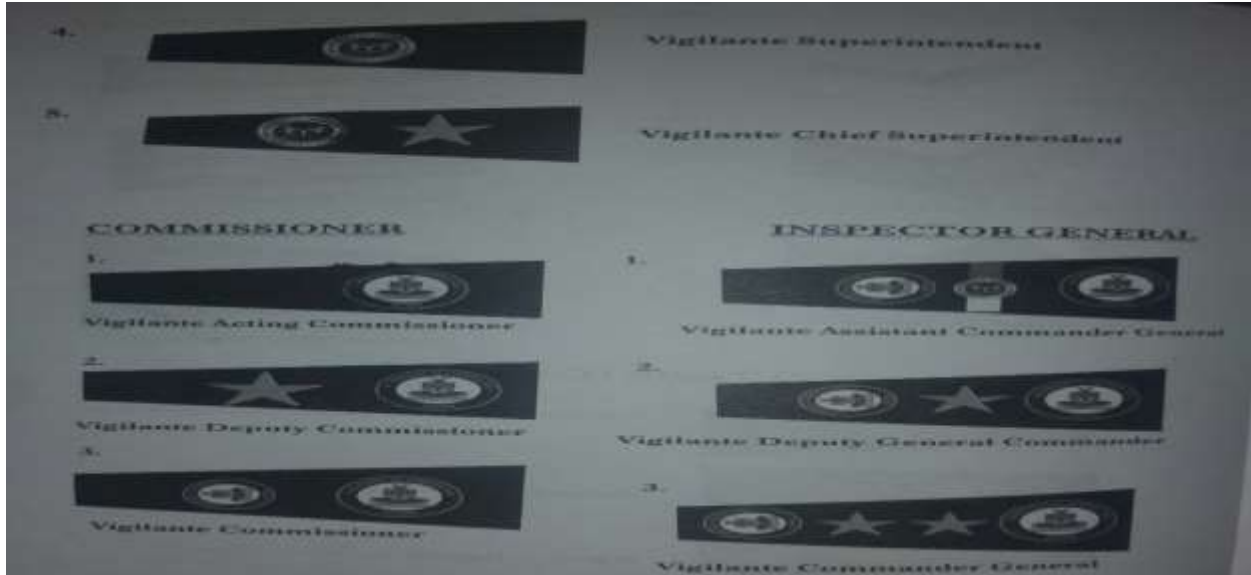
However, since the AVG is still a work in progress, the State Supervisory Committee has proposed some harmonised ranks for the vigilante units for easy discharge of duties. The ranks are to be divided into the Officer Cadre and Other Ranks Cadre. The Officer Cadre will further be divided into 3, the Superintendent Cadre, the Commissioner Cadre, and the Inspector General Cadre. Under the Superintendent Cadre are the Vigilante Acting Assistant Superintendent, Vigilante Assistant Superintendent, Vigilante Deputy Superintendent, Vigilante Superintendent and the Vigilante Chief Superintendent. Under the Commissioner Cadre are the Vigilante Acting Commissioner, Vigilante Deputy Commissioner and the Vigilante Commissioner. Under the Inspector General Cadre, are the Vigilante Assistant Commander General, Vigilante Deputy General Commander and the Vigilante Commander General. On the other hand, the Other Ranks Cadre is as well, further divided into the Rank and File Cadre and the Inspectors Cadre. Under the Rank and File, are the Vigilante Lance Corporal, Vigilante Full Corporal and the Vigilante Sergeant. Under the Inspectors Cadre are the Vigilante Acting Inspector, Vigilante Inspector and the Vigilante Chief Inspector. Below are pictures showing the proposed ranks and their denoting pips.

Other Ranks Cadre



Officer Cadre





Source: *A Handbook on Anambra Vigilante Group (A.V.G.)*, A Publication of the Anambra Vigilante Group, 55-56.

3. Anambra Vigilante Group and Security in Anambra State

3.1 Modus Operandi

Before the inception of the State-backed AVG, the original idea of creating vigilante units by various towns and communities of Anambra State was to provide grass root security for the lives and property of the local people. This idea then became the driving force of the different modes of operation of the vigilante groups. With vans and motorcycles purchased by the indigenes of their various communities, these vigilante groups embarked mostly on night and daytime patrols to ensure the smooth running of lawful activities at all times within their communities. They made use of local intelligence to smoke out criminals and punished them publicly before everybody. They wielded weapons of various degrees ranging from machetes to guns. They also intervened in times of crisis or misunderstanding between individuals or groups within their communities.

With the inception of the state-backed AVG, the mode of operation of these earlier vigilante groups were adopted and modified. Although the mode of operation of the AVG is still geared towards the protection of lives and property of the local populace, however, it incorporates other security agencies and tilts more towards assisting the Nigeria Police Force. In this regard vigilante groups make available, relevant information on criminals to the police, question and hand over to the police, any person of questionable character; maintain security barricades

at night in appropriate places; arrest and hand over to the police within the same day, any person who commits crime.

The vigilante units do not only provide security through patrols, they also serve as security guards in social events like burial ceremonies, weddings, traditional marriage ceremonies, church activities, native festivals, celebration parties, *etcetera*. Although they are paid a token for these services, they also use such avenues to pick up intelligence on individuals with questionable character within the communities. Many criminals in Uke community have been tracked down using information gathered from such social events. This is because, during such events, criminals tend to let their guard down, exposing their circle of friendship, their illegal transactions, crimes committed and in some cases, they even spill plans for future criminal operations.

Consequently, there are some few cases that can be handled by the AVG units. Such cases are low profile cases like theft, burglary, quarrels, fights, drug abuse, *etcetera*. High profile cases like kidnapping, armed robbery, homicide, murder, *etcetera*, are quickly referred to the police for further action. For these low profile crimes, punishments given by the vigilante units are mostly flogging and cutting of grasses as a form of community service. Sometimes, the vigilante unit offers counselling as a solution to some family cases brought before them. For the guards, although there are AVG laid down punishments for offender guards also, punishments of flogging and cutting of grasses are also served by vigilante guards who slightly contravene the laws of the AVG; In some

communities, such punishments are called VIP punishment.

On recruitment and training, recruitment and training of the vigilante security guards are totally handled by the Town Vigilante Supervisory Committee within their communities or towns. In due time, notice of vacancy is put up by this committee and interested candidates submit their application to the committee. After screening and interview are conducted for the applicants, qualified candidates are employed and sent for a one-week training with the police. There, they are basically trained on how to make use of guns (weapons management) and other physical fitness trainings like jogging, weight lifting and push ups, *etcetera*. When they return to their different AVG units, they are again, trained on physical fitness and weapons management. These series of trainings adequately prepare the recruits for the difficult task ahead. A respondent maintains that the training is the secret behind the low incidence of accidental discharge which was the case with the former local vigilantes. The rest of the training after this is on the field of operation where the new recruits are expected to learn from the old guards operating with them.

In the field of operation, SVSC had initially proposed that the vigilante guards should not be allowed to bear arms; but considering the risk of being overwhelmed by criminals if they are unarmed, the SVSC then liaised with the police to allow the vigilante guards bear fire arms. However, the weapons allowed to be used by the vigilante guards are only licenced double-barrelled guns, machetes, and other low profile self-defence weapons like heavy sticks or clubs. Pump action guns are also used by the vigilante guards but only when in joint operation with the police. All the guns used by the vigilante units are registered with the police and are kept in police custody, to be retrieved only when on duty.

Operations of the AVG are also not totally independent of the police and other security agencies. When some people were kidnapped in Anambra in 2019, the Operations Commander, Special Anti-Robbery Squad (OC SARS) of Anambra State came to the Headquarters of the AVG at Awka to seek assistance and collaboration in finding the kidnappers, dealing with them and retrieving the Kidnapped victims. This shows that the police acknowledges the important role of the vigilante guards in the security of Anambra State. Also, an informant has also mentioned how road safety officials and traffic police officials help their operations by clearing the way for the vehicles of the

AVG anytime they are on a critical mission. Sometimes, these people are earlier on, contacted on phone to be notified on the ongoing operation so as to clear the roads for easy movement of the AVG convoys. Umeobika in this regard, has as well highlighted that such collaboration with other security agencies other than the police, makes it impossible for criminals of various degrees to hide in villages. In that regard, anyone who breaches laws of other security agencies such as the National Drug Law Enforcement Agency (NDLEA), Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC), Nigerian Customs, *etcetera*, find it difficult to hide in rural communities of Anambra State because of the activities of the AVG.

3.2 Achievements

Prior to the period of vigilantism in Anambra State, communities of Anambra state such as Abatete, Uke, Umuoji and Ogidi, *etcetera* were said to be under serious security threats as hoodlums ransacked and ran down individuals and groups going about their legitimate businesses. However, since the advent of vigilantism in Anambra State, security, could be said to have reached grass root level to an extent; And with the extension of security to the grass root, one can as well argue that there has been an improvement in the security sector of Anambra State. Information gathered so far point out that the security situation of Anambra communities started positively transforming from the time of the local vigilantes. In fact, one of the informants revealed that it took both fearlessness and spirituality for the local vigilante of Abatete to be effective in those days. In his words, “With courage and spiritual fortification, the vigilante group of that time was able to expel armed robbers and kidnappers from Abatete community.”

Although the improvement in the security sector of Anambra started from the time of the OTA up to the period of the independent vigilante units, there was a dark aspect of vigilante operations in Anambra communities of that time. This was the despicable and extrajudicial killings carried out by these different vigilante groups of the early times. Owing to the level of criminality in Anambra communities of that time, even the new security outfit that emerged in the early 2000s after the AVS, the independent vigilantes still employed brutal force as a form of deterrence to criminals or intended criminals. This could also be said to had been copied from the strategy of the earlier existed OTA and the *Bakassi* Boys of the AVS who were known for their extra judicial killings of alleged criminals during their hey days. Such a gruesome incident played out

in Abatete community during the time of the independent or local vigilantes, when an alleged criminal was publicly beheaded in the middle of Eke-Agu Market. Such an eyesore caused a great pandemonium in the whole market and many of the market women deserted the market immediately in fear. In the view of an informant, this strategy was a good one as it really made a loud statement about the seriousness and the mission of the vigilante group that was brought to Abatete at that time. In his words, 'it was only then that the people really became afraid of the vigilante group in Abatete'.

Bringing a stop to such barbarism was one of the major achievements of the state-backed AVG because, with the advent of the state-backed AVG, efforts were made to re-organise and bring these independent vigilante units into one body and laws brought to define the powers of the vigilante guards who can no longer take human lives at will. This unification and legislation were a major stride worthy of mention because, in recent times, it remains unheard of that a vigilante unit executed an alleged criminal in an extra-judicial manner.

Despite associating its origin to the independent or local vigilantes of the earlier days, the AVG has also been given credit for engendering an improved security situation in different communities of Anambra State since its inception. In Abatete community, vigilante guards had been in different fire fights with criminals. One of such events took place at Nsukwu Abatete where they killed some of the armed robbers who engaged them in a fire fight. When the vigilante guards took down some of them, the rest took to their heels and escaped. This level of grass root security and responsiveness of the AVG units in various communities are the reasons behind the improved security in Anambra state. Owing to their mode of operation which familiarises the vigilante guards with their immediate environment, the AVG is credited for early responses to crimes and for bringing good leads that have aided the police in solving various degrees of crimes in Anambra State. When kidnapping became high in Anambra and the police swept into action to fight this crime, members of the AVG were said to have aided the police in fishing out kidnappers and pointing out their hide-outs (buildings), thereby, easing the job of the police.

Again, the maximum security provided for prominent men of Anambra State by the men of AVG has been a major credit to the AVG. The vigilante guards have proven their worth in different occasions where they protected prominent indigenes of Anambra State and their family members from criminal attacks. In one of

the incidents where the vigilante guards featured, the late Igwe of Uke (Sugbudu) was attacked by armed hoodlums believed to be assassins, but the intervention of the AVG men who were in his convoy saved the day. Similar incidents have occurred in Umuoji, Ideani, Ogidi and Abatete where men of the AVG repulsed very deadly attacks targeted at prominent rich indigenes of different Anambra communities. This may be why many prominent men of Anambra State still find Anambra safe to return to after their sojourn in the cities of the world.

Also, security in the homes of most traditional rulers in Anambra State is provided mainly by the men of the AVG. At Ogidi, the Igwe is never left alone without some security details from the men of AVG. Prominent families of Ogidi like the Osakwe family have also benefitted from the existence of the AVG in terms of maximising the use of the AVG security services. In Abatete, many prominent families like the Ntukogu family, the Efobis, the Oranikas, the Metuhs, the Ezeigwes, *etcetera*, from time to time, all make use of the security services of the AVG alike.

Another major success of the AVG in Anambra State is the securing of government back-up. One may say that the effectiveness of the AVG in the security sector of Anambra State earned them the strong backing of the government. According to an informant, having shown their capacity in the aspect of security in the whole of Anambra, when a directive was given by the police to all vigilantes to surrender their arms, the vigilante guards of the AVG were exempted from this exercise because insecurity may skyrocket in Anambra State if such happens in Anambra. As an indication of government's satisfaction in their role in the security situation of Anambra, the government of Anambra State donated patrol vehicles to the SVSC and some of the communities' AVG Units. Many of these vehicles are indigenously manufactured by Innoson Motors (see plates 1 and 2). Such a step does not just improve physical security but encourages indigenous industries, boosts the economy of Anambra state in particular and that of Nigeria in general.

Similarly, the government of Anambra State has also erected a big storey building at Agu Awka, within the state capital, for the smooth running of this security outfit. The building is named 'Lion Building' because the logo of the AVG is the head of a lion with the word "Action" written under it. Prior to this period in 2019, the AVG Headquarters was domiciled in a rented building located in Commissioners' Quarters, behind Anambra State

Government House at Awka. All these are milestone achievements and indications of the effectiveness of this security outfit in the existence of Anambra State. (See plates 3, 4 and 5).

Today, the AVG is like the bedrock of security in Anambra State. This is because, they have enhanced early identification of criminals and timely intervention in crimes; hence, they have worked with the police as mutual resolvers of crime in various communities of Anambra State. Having established in his study that vigilantism ensures accountability, fairness, and justice which all bring societal welfare gains in a societies of Anambra State, Anadi recommends that stakeholders including the government and NGOs should explore the option of improving the lives of the entire citizenry through the establishment of vigilante groups in the country. That is why Onwuegbusi suggests that having solved lots of insecurity problems which has earned them public support, the services of the vigilante group be enhanced and made more effective because it will increase the safety of the community and its residents.

4. Challenges and Security Implications of Vigilantism in Anambra State and Nigeria

In as much as the AVG has achieved a lot in transforming the security architecture of Anambra State, there are as well lots of challenges and limitations that have confronted the group. These challenges on their own, have varying security implications not just on the security of Anambra State, but also on the National Security of Nigeria. One of these challenges is the enactment of crippling laws that have not just limited the powers of the AVG, but to an extent, have stripped the AVG, the supposed power to maintain security in different communities of Anambra State. One of such laws is found under Section 4 (General), subsection 4:1 of the AVG Code of Conduct. Under this section, it is stated that AVG units should not carry out any 'minor' or 'major' operation without police presence.

However, following the numerical strength of the Nigeria Police Force, adequate distribution of police personnel in every location has been a problem since the country has been distributing below the UN standard of police personnel distribution. As at 2006, the UN standard stands at 300 police personnel per 100,000 people. Meanwhile, the totality of the Nigeria Police is about 371,800 grouped into 36 state commands, 12 zones and 7 administrative organs to police over 200 million people living on a landmass of about 923,768km² called Nigeria. As at 2016,

Anambra State had a projected population of about 5,527,800 and it is obvious that about 10,000 police personnel cannot adequately police this population and an area of about 4,710 km².

This weakness has made it impossible for the Nigeria Police to adequately police all parts of Nigeria in general and Anambra in particular. In Anambra State, about 3 or four communities are merged under one divisional headquarters of about 20 men. With such reality on ground, it becomes impossible for there to be a police presence in all operations of the AVG. The implication of this lies in the possibility that men of the AVG may become laws upon themselves and may begin to make drastic security decisions that will not only affect Anambra but the entire country. Since the AVG units of Anambra communities have neglected that law which is unrealisable and, in that regard, have been carrying out operations without the police, it suggests that other binding laws of the AVG have lost their potency.

Again, another legal issue that has formed a limitation to the activities of the AVG is the issue of jurisdiction. There are no clear-cut lines separating crimes to be handled by the police and crimes to be handled by the AVG. In fact, the laws establishing the AVG have categorically stripped off the AVG, any power to handle any crime within their areas of jurisdiction. The Part II of the Law establishing the Anambra State Group Vigilante and its Supervisory Committees and other Matters, captures the functions and powers of the AVG, and it states that the function of the AVG shall be to assist the Nigeria Police and other security agencies. It further states that the function of the AVG is to arrest and hand over to the Police within the same day, anybody who commits crime for investigation. This clearly shows that no provision was made for any level of crime to be handled by the AVG. However, leaders of vigilante units have accorded their various units, the power to handle what they consider low intensity crimes like burglary, civil disobedience, juvenile delinquency, drug abuse, *etcetera*. They have even created punishment for such crimes including shaming of the culprit through public display, flogging and other punishments like cutting of grasses. This aspect is also very important to Nigeria's national security because, it is obvious that the Nigeria Police lacks the capacity to handle all the crimes brought before them. So, handling some of these issues, even though out of their jurisdiction, helps the security situation of Anambra State in particular and Nigeria in general. However, the question of the legality of such roles played by the AVG remains unanswered.

Leaders of AVG units have also cried foul of the treatment of the cases taken to the police to handle. This is because, the Nigeria Police lacks public confidence and support due to wide-spread and endemic corruption, inefficiency and other administrative and operational problems within the police as an institution. AVG leaders have similarly alleged that due to the massive corruption among the personnel of the Nigerian Police Force and the ineffectiveness of the Nigerian judicial system, most of the criminals taken to the police pay their way out; and on regaining their freedom, vigilante guards who arrested and handed them over to the police become their prime targets for elimination. This simply makes a mess of the job and makes it riskier than it should have been. This is why one of the commanders divulged that due to such lapses within the police, that he instructs his boys to inflict injuries of reasonable degree like breaking of the limbs, on criminals before handing them over to the police. In as much as this would not guarantee full safety of the vigilante guards if the criminals secure their freedom; the commander believes it would deter freed criminals from going back to crime.

Again, the AVG structure may be said to be unhealthy too attached to the Nigeria Police. This stems from its leadership which is dominated mostly by retired police officers. The dependency on the police to carry out major and minor operations as well as to detain and punish criminals are also pointers to the over-attachment of the AVG to the Nigeria Police Force. This creates opportunity for fraternisation between the officials of the two structures and the consequent transfer of traits and features from one institution to the other. This is to say that since the Nigeria Police Force suffers massive institutional corruption, hence, this level of mix up between the police and the AVG may breed possible transfer of police corruption to the AVG. Residents have already started complaining of corrupt activities of vigilante guards who collect bribes from citizens to enthrone injustice in various communities. A case was cited by an informant who alleged that the Abatete unit of the AVG collected bribe during the February 2019 House of Representatives Election of Idemili North/South Constituency to favour Hon. Ifeanyi Ibezim's bid over that of Hon. Obinna Chidoka. The informant said that the Abatete AVG helped in arresting and detaining the supporters of Hon. Chidoka in the bushes of Nkwo Agbaja, just to secure victory for Ibezim who is an indigene of Abatete.

This confirms the submissions of an earlier study in Nnewi North LGA of Anambra where findings reveal

that vigilante guards easily align themselves with political stalwarts for some monetary gains; so sometimes, they may be used to victimise political opponents. Such scenarios suggest that the fears of Anti-State Police propagators may not be far from the truth if State Police is instituted in Nigeria since influential politicians can bend AVG, a state-owned security outfit to do their wish. However, this does not negate the fact that such practices sprang up from the original police structure of Nigeria which if completely done away with, State Police may work perfectly better than envisaged without corruption and intimidation.

Similarly, as a follow up on the issue of jurisdiction, so much limitations on the legislation of cases even among communities and town unions have affected the zeal and speed of the AVG in intervening in family matters. Many communities have made jurisdiction over issues concerning lands and ownership of landed property, a preserve of the town unions. This has only made the AVG units in most communities to abstain from handling family matters. However, what may be viewed as an irony of the situation is that a great percentage of what metamorphoses into crimes in societies sometimes have its roots in family issues. Fights that have led to loss of lives and deformity of promising youths in Ogidi, Abatete, Umuoji, Uke, *etcetera*, have all been precipitated by family issues. In the course of field work, two scenarios played out before the researchers. On the 24th day of April 2019, a distressed widow ran into the compound of the Abatete AVG to lay complaints of the maltreatment she had been going through in the hands of her brother-in-law and his family because of the property of her late husband. The widow was looking battered showing signs of physical assault which was not different from her complaints. As the grass root security outfit and a supposed last hope of the poor, what the researchers expected of the unit was a swift move to the compound to douse the situation and make sure the widow was safe in that family. However, the response of the Abatete AVG was surprising, the unit head instructed the widow to go and make her complaints at the secretariat of the Abatete Development Union (ADO) where family matters are treated. This was a life and death situation for the widow, or at least, it looked so. Out of disappointment, the widow sat there crying but help was not in view. She knew that the ADO does not have enforcement power and there are lots of issues on the table of the town union that have not been treated.

The second scenario also happened on the 25th day of April in the presence of the researchers at Ogidi where a man in despair, ran into the Ogidi unit headquarters of the AVG. He came with bruises and machete wounds which he claimed were inflicted on him by his neighbour over boundaries in compound and spreading of washed clothes in the compound. The alleged assaulter and his wife not only inflicted wounds on the complainant but were still beating up the wife of the complainant when he ran to the AVG office to make these complaints. What was expected by the researchers was for the vigilante guards to sweep into action by following the complainant to the scene of the assault, to at least, arrest the assaulters and rescue the wife of the complainant. However, the AVG unit still advised the embattled man to go back to the compound and wait till the AVG creates time to come to his aid later in the day. Out of fear of being killed by the assaulters who had already used machete on him, the complainant kept roaming around the premises of the Ogidi AVG. If the wife of the complainant was later killed by the assaulters, it would only be known by posterity. When the researchers enquired about the reason for such neglect of such a serious case, the Ogidi AVG personnel told the researchers that such cases were beyond the purview of the cases they could handle. He maintained that there exists a Peace and Reconciliation Committee within the premises of the AVG which handles such issues.

Another major challenge confronting the AVG is the issue of funding. There is no gainsaying that the funding of the AVG is very poor. Nonetheless, the issue of poor funding has created more problems than solutions in the activities and existence of the AVG. When the former Governor of Anambra State, Dr Chris Ngige took interest in the local vigilantes, he started paying 30, 000 naira each, to all vigilante guards. This amount was reasonable to the guards and motivated them to work assiduously. However, when the government of Peter Obi came, which was later replaced by the government of Dr Willie Obiano, the salary of the vigilante guards fell to 10,000 Naira, each. In fact, the 10,000 naira is only paid to 20 members of the surveillance team of every community. Meanwhile, the patrol team (vigilante guards) are paid 10,000 each by the communities where they are operating. An informant argues that the payment going to the members of the surveillance team is just an aberration because they are not the ones doing the job. He maintains that arms bearers (vigilante guards) should be paid well to avoid mutiny against their high command since they are the ones in the field. Similar issues have been raised by Alemika and Chukwuma who have argued that poor

remuneration has been a major factor affecting the performance of the vigilante groups. They maintain good remuneration is a good source of motivation for the guards and has the tendency of keeping them away from engaging in crimes for money. In agreement, Knowland presented a case in Mexico, where a group of vigilantes who helped in fighting kidnapping and drug trafficking, sometimes deviated into drug dealings and even became exporters of drugs due to poor remuneration.

With poor remuneration, the general appearance of the AVG has become poor as vigilante guards even find it difficult to acquire the standard security kits required for the job including the general uniform prescribed by the SVSC (see plate 6). In fact, the patrol vehicles, branded T-shirts and trousers worn by the vigilante guards, their guns and ammunition, down to their boots are bought and maintained by the guards themselves and sometimes, by wealthy men in the societies. That is why most of the guards put on canvass in the field instead of security boots. Although the canvass is seen to also allow for swift movement of the vigilante guards during pursuit of criminals, unlike security boots which are mostly heavy and do not allow vigilante guards to run properly during a pursuit. In some communities, there exists a welfare office that takes care of the needs of the vigilante guards. Just like in Abatete, its welfare office is called the Security Committee Finance. This committee is made up of barristers, intellectuals and other well-to-do Abatete indigenes who are in high positions in different fields of work. They are all appointed into this committee by the Igwe-In-Council. Yet, what is being paid to the vigilante guards are mere peanuts, the same 10,000 naira. Also, some of the vehicles given to the patrol team most times lack maintenance and end up becoming rickety and immobile (see plate 7). Even the petrol used in the vehicle are sometimes purchased on credit by the patrol team due to lack of fund.

This situation now leaves the AVG units to source for funds from different means. As a fund raising strategy, AVG units provide security in social gatherings like weddings, burial events, wake keeping events, *etcetera*. They also provide security for wealthy men in the society for some token. Most times, they do not get paid more than 10,000 Naira for any of these functions. Consequently, with the high risks involved and the poor remuneration, the job mainly attracts individuals with questionable character. Ironically, these individuals who end up being recruited into the vigilante guards of communities are people who are not supposed to fraternise with criminals. The question then is, how

possible can that be, if they were already criminals before joining the force? This is why Igbokwe argues that even the vigilantes themselves instil knee-bucking fear in the citizens because, such inconsistencies blur the distinction between criminals and the vigilante guards who may become almost indistinguishable. Such loopholes may even create the avenue for vigilante guards to serve as links through which arms go to criminals on hire. In that regard, he submits that vigilante guards degenerate into monsters that end up haunting everyone in the society.

Informants from various communities have told stories of how vigilante guards are seen publicly smoking and drinking, flirting with women of questionable character and fraternising with criminals. In fact, one of the informants reiterated that vigilante guards are the ones teaching Abatete youths how to smoke Indian hemp (*Igboo*) since they smoke it publicly to the sight of everyone in the community. Since such calibre of people are the ones signing up for the job, their lack of formal education and proper long and intensive trainings affect their level of professionalism in the field of operation. Hence, as advanced by Alemika and Chukwuma as well as Olaniyi who have emphasised the danger and consequences of using uneducated and untrained citizens as security agents, this has been exposing villagers to great risks of being brutalised by vigilante guards. This gives credence to the findings of an earlier study in Ekwusigo LGA of Anambra State where respondents have bemoaned lack of education and proper training as one of the major challenges facing the vigilante group in their discharge of security duties. The study argues that if they are not properly trained, they cannot properly key into public service and hence, they cannot be paid very well.

Amidst such risks however, the confusion that comes with the two options of either putting up with the excesses of the vigilante guards, or, risking the insecurity that may come with the disbandment of the AVG, has generated mixed feelings among residents with some proposing that the AVG should be discarded, while some still argue in favour of their retention. This is why an earlier study on Oyi LGA of Anambra State suggests that since the society needs enlightened and trained people in the security sector to fight insecurity, vigilante guards must undergo proper training and be provided with the necessary tools for the job before they can earn not only public respect and trust, but also, the adequate payment as required by the job.

In the same vein, it is the same poor funding that has negated the rule of recruiting people who are indigenes of the community for better appreciation of their operational terrain. However, guards are randomly selected and brought from distant places away from the recruiting town because the job is not attractive to the indigenes of the recruiting communities. Although one of the informants have argued that most times, vigilante commanders prefer such unknown and unfamiliar faces so that they can execute their duties well without any bias or feeling of familial affiliation. However, in most cases, once any of these individuals goes wrong and is sanctioned, he gets angry and resigns. The implication of this is not only that it defeats the idea of guards being familiar with the terrain, but also, it strengthens many criminal gangs since some of the resigning guards are their former members and they have acquired the knowledge of the security structure of the AVG; hence, a big security threat to his immediate society in particular and Nigeria at large.'

All these challenges have affected the effectiveness of vigilante units in many communities with security consequences on the security architecture of the larger Nigeria. As confirmed by Abatete community commander who was lamenting on the reduction of the effectiveness of the vigilante units due to these challenges; he said, "Before, people used to call the Vigilante Group for immediate action but now, they have stopped".

5. Conclusion

There is no doubt that the current security challenges in Nigeria are overwhelming for the official security agencies set up to protect lives and property especially the Nigeria Police. In that regard, it became a matter of necessity that alternative security measures were needed to complement the efforts of the conventional security outfits like the police. Hence, quasi police outfits began to emerge and one of these groups which is discussed in this paper is the Anambra Vigilante Group. The group which began as pockets of vigilante units in different communities and villages of Anambra State, soon secured the legal backing of the state and became a unified body known as the AVG. Since the inception of the AVG, the group has carried out a lot of operations with many successes. However, a lot of challenges have been rocking the group and each of these challenges has its own implication on the security of Anambra state and that of Nigeria as a nation. In as much as it could be argued that the existence of informal security outfits such as the AVG is an indication that state police has indirectly begun to run in Nigeria,

though not officially; however, the challenges identified in turn suggest possible security challenges that could be posed by the establishment of state police in Nigeria. Either way, there is need for an alternative in addressing the security problems of Nigeria; and this alternative has to be a grass root approach; the kind adopted by the AVG in today's Anambra State of Nigeria, though with a rejigged structure and more defined roles. In fact, such a structure could be adopted as a blueprint for the proposed community policing in Nigeria.

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