

Private Guard Companies and Crime Control in Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria

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Abstract: This paper explores the role of private guard companies and crime control in Akwa Ibom State of Nigeria. The history of private security companies in Nigeria are discussed along with the challenges affecting their operations. The structural functionalist theory of Robert K. Merton is adopted as the theoretical guide for this study. A survey research design was utilized to study a sample of One Hundred and Sixty (160) respondents of different categories of people who constitutes the private security practitioners in Akwa Ibom State as well as members of the public who reside in the community where these private guard companies offer their services. Findings of the study revealed that the private guard business in Nigeria has been infiltrated by unregistered and unlicensed persons who constitute a serious security threat on account of current insecurity situation in the country. From Findings, the study has suggested that federal government should amend the current Private Guard Companies Act to check a number of abuses most especially with regards to training, sanctions and appropriate facilities for effective security services in the region.

Keywords: Private Guards, Companies, Crime Control, Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria.

INTRODUCTION

Security is a necessity in every human society. The implication being that, its absence threatens the survival of individuals and their properties. This is why governments worldwide invest huge resources to ensure that lives and properties of their citizens are secured. However, it is still argued that, no government has the wherewithal to supply one hundred percent security for her people, and no matter how endowed and organized a country is, it can hardly be devoid of security challenges[1,2].

In Nigeria, the public security agencies are charged with the responsibility of supplying security for its peoples' lives and properties, and the nation's constitution makes provision for a single police force. By this provision, no other security agency is allowed to be established by the Federation or any of the component parts[3]. However, as the society progresses, new forms of violent crimes have also emerged and the society has become more insecure with many people getting involved in diverse organized criminal activities. The current security challenges have over-stretched the state security agencies and have created a common ground for the establishment of alternative security institutions to help compliment the activities of the public security sector and as well as fill the existing security gaps[4].

Recent security threats such as; bombings, kidnappings, oil theft and other organized urban crimes in Nigeria have skyrocketed the demand for security guard companies across the country. Abrahamsen and Williams [5], observed that "private security has thus become a major part of the nation's economy and there are currently between 1,500 and 2,000 Private Security Companies, employing in excess of 100,000 people". They further noted that the industry now produces personnel who guard businesses, homes and neighborhoods currently and advise transnational companies and embassies on risks and dangers to their assets and employees. In view of the insecurity situation, the Nigerian government for over two decades ago, set in a motion and passed an Act in the legislature that regulates the establishment of the Private Guard Company (PGC). Unfortunately, it appears that a number of elements of the current government Act with regards to licensing process, staff identification, the use of weapons and general requirements for PGC owners and staff are obsolete and have not been reviewed [6]. Furthermore, many Nigerian citizens do not seem to have adequate knowledge of the Private Guard Companies and their activities, probably due to lack of publicity. Also, security experts at different forums have linked the establishment and subsequent proliferation of the PGCs to the inability of the Nigeria Police Force (NPF) and other state security agencies to stem the rising crime rate in the country. Others view the current situation as a creation of the rich to

compliment the already existing state security service, since it is apparent that the services of the PGCs in Nigeria are rendered to people who can afford them, particularly the multinationals, banks, and government institutions, thus leaving the poor with an option of forming their own security organizations such as vigilantes and militia groups in order to ensure their individual and property protection[7]. This situation undermines the establishment and functionality of the PGCs and as well put them in the same perspective with the Nigeria Police Force who neglects the poor masses and is willing to offer much of its services to the rich few and their cohorts. This situation is problematic especially now that Nigeria is facing numerous security challenges that require a collective approach by all security agencies to address the situation. Based on the foregoing observations, this study intends to examine the role of private guard companies in crime control in Nigeria, taking a case study of Akwa Ibom State. This is necessary because despite the presence of private security personnel in the state alongside that of the public security agencies, the crime rate most especially in urban areas are still on the increase and residents of the State still do not have the needed security services to enable them to engage effectively in their socio-economic activities.

STATEMENT OF PROBLEM

The Private Guard Companies Act of the Federal Republic of Nigeria enacted in 1986 has statutorily empowered the private security sector to operate and perform security functions in the country. However, it appears that it is only the public security sector that is working assiduously to curb the ravaging security problems affecting Nigeria in recent times. Daily, the media portrays more of the services offered by public security agencies to control crime situations in the country, while that of the PGCs with similar task are left widely unpublicized. Furthermore, agents of the PGCs are often seen at work in multinational companies, banks, supermarkets, hospitals, eateries, and schools across the country conducting checks at entrances of these establishments although their attempts to prevent serious crime situations in the country is yet to be accessed. This situation calls for enquiry. Private security companies were purportedly established to compliment the efforts of the public security sector and help breach the existing security gap, yet their contribution to crime control is still doubtful. These observations therefore formed the basis of this study, prompting an investigation into the activities of private security companies and their contribution to crime control.

Objectives of the Study

General Objective: To examine the role of private guard companies in crime control in Nigeria in general and Akwa Ibom State in particular. This general

objective will be achieved through collaboration with the following specific objectives which are to:

1. Identify the operational challenges of private guard companies in Akwa Ibom State;
2. Assess the relationship between public and private security outfits in Akwa Ibom State in their attempt to control crime;
3. Examine the strength of the Private Guard Companies Act in regulating the activities of private guard companies in Akwa Ibom State;
4. Find out what the government has done to assist the private guard companies in Akwa Ibom State in their attempt to control crime;
5. Examine the perception of the public towards private guard companies and their activities in Akwa Ibom State; and
6. Proffer useful suggestions as remedies to the challenges of private guard companies in Nigeria in general and Akwa Ibom State in particular based on the study findings.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The task of supplying security to lives and properties is the exclusive function of the public security institutions. This forms the major thrust of Thomas Hobbes (1588-1679) social contract theory which noted that security and order could only be achieved by a contract in which all citizens would give up all their individual powers to a central power (the sovereign) in return for the protection of life and property[8]. However, as the society progresses, this ideology has proven uncongenial to modern crime control strategy due to the enormous crime problems and its consequences. This creates room for the adoption of Robert K. Merton (1910-2003) structural functionalist theory on “functional alternative” which submits that, it is not only the consequences of formalized social institutions that makes the society works, but that other functioning cultural institutions can play the same role. Thus, people should be willing to admit that there exist various structural and functional alternatives that can perform the same task in the society[9]. This assumption explains the fact that the Nigeria Police Force and its related security agencies cannot on their own solve the complex crime problems in our society, therefore resources from outside the system are desperately needed, as well as new ways of thinking about these holistic public safety problems from the inside that can bring distinctive but complementary skills and resources to address the present situation and can produce coordinated and targeted responses to diverse public safety problems.

Private Security: Its conceptualization

The term ‘private security’ lacks a universal definition. However, there are various attempts toward an acceptable definition. Adegoke[6] noted that private security industry comprises of those persons who supply security for people and property under contract

and for profit. It represents self-employed individuals and privately funded business organizations providing security-related services to specific clientele for a fee. It is also a profit enterprise, a corporation or a limited liability partnership, which supplies either armed or unarmed security services to both private and public clients. Florquin [10] sees private security companies as legally registered business entities that supplies security on a contractual basis regardless of the situation. In Nigeria, private security consists of activities of night watchmen. This include individuals who are employed directly without the influence of the state or any security company to supply guard services at diverse homes, business premises, religious places, schools, hospitals and the likes for a fee. There are also private guard companies, that is the non-state security firms rendering security services for economic gains such as paid thugs who go about as guards to politicians and some religious leaders, and also that of guard dogs kept by individuals and private companies for security purposes.

Private Guard Companies primarily engage in supplying guard and patrol services, such as bodyguard, guard dog, parking security and security guard services. Some of these companies engage in supplying advanced special operations services if the client demands it. Services supplied by these companies include; the control of unauthorized activity or entry, traffic regulation, access control, fire and theft prevention and detection. These services are broadly described as the protection of personnel and assets. Other security services such as roofing patrol, bodyguard, and guard dog services are also included, but occupy a small portion of the industry[11-12]. The Private Security Companies also offer services designed to create an impact on the security of persons and property. These services range from logistical support, crisis and risk management to physical protection of people and goods, training of armed forces, and even operational combats [13].

The History and Development of Private Guard Companies in Nigeria

The specific date on the emergence of Private Guard Companies in Nigeria is controversial; however, the industry has a long history in the country and has become a major part of the nation's economy [14-16, 6, 1]., noted that PGCs began in 1965, when Alhaji Mumuni founded the Nigerian Security and Investigations Company (NSICO). This was followed by the establishment of the Nigerian Investigation and Safety Company in 1967; Omo Security Services, which started operations in 1971; Metropolitan Guards, and Arksego (Nigeria) Limited, founded in 1980. Contrary to this view, the CLEEN Foundation [19] in its analysis links the history of PGCs in Nigeria to the work of a man named Victor Vanni in the early 1970s. Whereas Adegoke [6] noted that the expansion of

private property in Nigeria and Africa generally tends to be a key factor responsible for the growth of private security. He further observed that, "property owners have realized the commercial benefits of utilizing their own security company, since public security agents are unable to meet the security needs of various segments of the public, hence, the growing acceptance of private security guards in the country and the continuous demand for their services by individuals and corporate organizations to safeguard the safety of their lives and properties". This observation tends to contradict the opinion that the activities of private security guards prior to the nation's independence laid the foundation for the emergence of private guard companies in Nigeria. However, despite these public opinions, the fact is that private security companies do exist in Nigeria and it is growing at a rapid rate. This hindsight is affirmed by Nexus Strategic Partnership Limited [20] in its observation that Nigeria's private security industry has expanded rapidly, and has offered its services to international organisations, NGOs, embassies, local and international businesses particularly the multinational oil companies. Also, Abrahamsen and Williams in their [14] independent study on ('The Globalisation of Private Security, A Country's Report: Nigeria'), observed that there are between 1,500 and 2,000 private security companies (PSCs) in Nigeria, and they employ more than 100,000 persons.

The Legal Framework for Private Guard Companies in Nigeria

Section 1 (1) of the Private Guard Companies Act Cap 367 of Laws of the Federal Republic of Nigeria holds that:

"As from the commencement of the PGCs Act, no organisation shall perform the service of watching, guarding, patrolling or carrying of money for the purpose of providing protection against crime unless the organisation concerned: is registered as a company under or pursuant to the Companies and Allied Matters Act; has applied for and has been granted a licence by the Minister in accordance with the provisions of this Act; and is wholly owned by Nigerians in accordance with the Schedule to the Nigerian Enterprises Promotion Act".

This implies that any organisation which intends to perform the services of watching, guarding, patrolling or carrying of money for the purpose of supplying protection against crime in Nigeria must meet the requirements of the aforementioned section of the PGCs Act to operate freely[6]. Again, such organization apart from being registered, licensed and Nigerian-owned, must not employ the use of firearms in its operations as stated in Section (2) of the Act.

On the topic of employment and training of personnel, the Act requires the approval of the Minister

of Interior after sufficient screening of the companies concerned before they are given licences to carry out employment and trainings of PGCs personnel. However as observed by Abrahamsen and Williams [14], there are no required standards of training, which varies widely across the sector.

With regards to prohibited activities, the PGCs Act in Part (3) has spelt out prohibited offences which cautions operators of private guard companies in Nigeria not to: act as debt collectors; use the name private detective or act as police officers in their course of duty; be at their areas of duty without uniforms and identity cards; hire, transfer or sale their licences to other company(s); carry or supply firearms; make adverts without an address indicating the name of the company and its location, etc. Violation of these legal requirements attracts penalties which are stipulated in Section 32 of the PGCs Act as follows: “where a person commits an offence under the PGCs Act, he shall be liable on conviction thereof-

- a) in the case of an individual, to a fine of ₦400 or imprisonment for 12 months or to both such fine and imprisonment;
- b) and in the case of a body (whether corporate or incorporate), to a fine of not less than ₦5000”.

After examining these punitive measures, it must be stated that the monetary values attached as penalties to offenders of the PGCs Act as indicated above does not meet the test of time, as such amounts are too small to serve as deterrence to culprits who are, or would-be offenders in today’s Nigeria. This collaborates with the observation of Adegoke (2008), as earlier noted in the introductory part of this article, that various elements of the current PGCs Act are obsolete and therefore needs a review.

Enforcement of these statutory requirements is within the powers of the Federal Government of Nigeria through its Ministry of Interior under the direct supervision of the Private Guard Companies Department (PGCD) of the Nigeria Security and Civil Defence Corps (NSCDC) which is saddled with the responsibility of monitoring and supervising the activities of the Private Guard Companies in Nigeria. Thus, it is expected that before any private security company is approved for operations in Nigeria, the Minister of Interior through the assistance of the PGCD of the Nigeria Security and Civil Defence Corps must assess license applications, consider the character, competence and integrity of the company directors, amongst other things before giving such approvals [16,17].

Within the international scene, a group of global private security firms came together in 2010 at Geneva and signed an International Code of Conduct (ICoC) with the objective of strengthening respect for

human rights and humanitarian law within their operations. This event committed these companies to a set of principles set out in 70 paragraphs guiding employees and managers in their conduct as well as overall company management in ensuring respect for human rights and international law [18]. Unfortunately, it appears that there is laxity in the implementation process of the ICOC as there are complaints about the violation of human rights by private security operatives in the course of their duty. A typical example is the indiscriminate shooting of civilians by agents of Blackwater security firm (an American private security company) in Nisoor Square, Afghanistan in an attempt to restore order in a warring situation. This, and many more criminal offences levelled against private security operators has motivated the quest for an effective system of accountability and probity for private security and other contractors especially in conflicting zones.

Challenges of Private Guard Companies in Nigeria

There are numerous challenges facing the Private Security Industry in Nigeria, despite its growth and profitability. Some of these problems include:

Lack of Adequate Training: One major challenge of private security guards in Nigeria is lack of adequate training. Most private security companies are always in the habits of recruiting people as guards with little or no training. Many of the private security guards undergo only physical fitness as training while they have no knowledge of several other aspects of security training including intelligence collection and analysis, martial arts, crowd control, riot control, data mining and automated data analysis in crime mitigation, etc. All they are interested in is profit maximization. Such problem has been responsible for the incompetence and inefficiency in the activities of many private guards in Nigeria[6].

The Problem of Poor Wages and Working Conditions: It appears to be one of the leading factors militating against efficiency in private security activities in the country. In spite of high cost of living, many private security guards earn salaries as low as ₦6, 000 per month. It is unfortunate that government has not considered in its regulation of private security activities the importance of prioritizing the welfare of guards commissioned by various private security companies in the country [14]. Poor working conditions confronting a large number of private security guards in the country are responsible for low job satisfaction, which in turn has led to low job performance and lack of commitment amongst them [6].

The Cost of Registration: The high cost of registration is another challenge facing most private guards companies. According to the NSCDC Act 2003 as amended in 2007 and cited by Adegoke [6], the NSCDC as the regulatory agency, is authorized to

perform functions of registering private security companies operating in Nigeria. The Act mandates every private security firm wishing to be registered to have a minimum capital of ₦10 million. This high cost of registering a Private Security Company has made many private security suppliers to operate without proper registration, which in turn has made it difficult for government to regulate the running of most private security companies in the country. Thus, this inadequate regulatory exercise attracts some risk because in a situation where a security guard commissioned by unregistered private security firms errs, it becomes difficult for the regulatory agency to communicate with such organization.

Risk of Violent Attacks: This is another major challenge being experienced by private security guards in Nigeria. The Private Guard Companies Act (1986) as cited by Adegoke [6] has made the position of government known on non permission of private security guards to provide armed services in the country. Private security guards are not permitted to carry specific weapons such as guns in Nigeria and in performing their duties; the lives of many of them are usually at risk. This is because the offenders are often equipped with dangerous weapons such as Ak47 assault rifles and grenades; thus the private guards face the risk of losing their lives when confronting armed offenders. This situation has led to untimely deaths of many private security guards in Nigeria and has renewed the quest for government to review its laws and allow Private Security agents to be armed.

Lack of clear legislation: Unlike the public police institutions, the private security industry lacks clear regulation that would guide them to carry-out security functions. The current legislation passed concerning the registration, licensing, identification and training of private legal personnel, is regarded as an array of legal privileges aimed at regulating those who operate within the security industry, and to check those who wish to enter it against certain criteria and minimum training standards[6].

METHODOLOGY

The research design adopted in this study is the survey design, due to the exploratory nature of the study. The design is directed at collecting data using the primary source of questionnaire and interview schedules. Other secondary data were obtained through library research and online publications on private security companies (PSCs). Official records from governmental agencies, such as the NSCDC were also valuable to the study. Three local government Areas (LGAs) in Akwa Ibom State, namely Uyo, Eket, and Ikot Ekpene Local Government Areas representing the three senatorial districts of the state were purposively selected for this study because they have the highest

concentration of private security personnel within their domains.

The study population consisted of a total number of One Hundred and Sixty (160) respondents of different categories of people who constituted the private security practitioners in Akwa Ibom State as well as members of the public who resides in the community were the private security guard companies offer their services. In Akwa Ibom State, there are fifty-eight private guard companies registered and licensed for the provision of security services. A list comprising the names of these companies was derived from the Private Guard Company Department (PGCD) of the Nigeria Security and Civil Defence Corps, and a purposive sampling technique was adopted to select from the list companies that have their services extended from Uyo metropolis to cover other local government areas particularly Ikot Ekpene and Eket. From the deduced number of companies, a simple random sampling was used to pick 10 companies for a Focus Group Discussion (FGD). This included Teskon Guards Nigeria Limited, Strict Guards Security Limited, Safeway Security and Technical Services Limited, Technocrime, Sovereign Guards, Gofia Nig. Ltd, Spectrum Guards, Liberty Guards, Forte-Knox Guards, and Watchdog International Security and Safety Company Limited. Each of these companies was reached and invited for a Group Discussion via contacts provided in the list given by the NSCDC. They were requested to send in a representative who has worked for the company for more than a year.

Furthermore, copies of the questionnaire were administered on 150 members of the public. They were chosen using the systematic random sampling from the selected three LGAs in Akwa Ibom State. 50 respondents were drawn from each of the headquarters of the three LGAs. In each headquarters, five streets were randomly chosen. On each street, ten households were sampled with systematic random sampling. An adult male and an adult female who lives on that street were qualified for the administration of the questionnaire. Where the respondents could not read and write the researcher adopted the interview method based on the items on the questionnaire, until the required number of respondents was interviewed. At the completion of the data collection, all responses were presented in table form. This method helped to show at a glance the trend of data collected and the related variables.

FINDINGS

150 copies of questionnaires were given to members of the public to find out their perception of private guard companies and crime control in Akwa Ibom State, however only 133 copies of those questionnaires were retrieved, constituting 88.6 %

percent proportion of the sample size (see table 1 for details).

Table 1: Percentage distribution of respondents by data generating procedure

| Respondents | Copies of questionnaire administered | Percentage | Questionnaire Retrieved | Percentage of questionnaire Retrieved |
|-------------|--------------------------------------|------------|-------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| Uyo | 50 | 33.3 | 47 | 31.3 |
| Ikot Ekpene | 50 | 33.3 | 42 | 28 |
| Eket | 50 | 33.3 | 44 | 29.3 |
| Total | 150 | 100 | 133 | 88.6 |

Source: Field Work (2014).

Private Guard Companies as seen by the public

From investigations, majority of members of the public (84.7%) drawn from the study areas affirmed that they are aware of the existence of private guard companies in Akwa Ibom State. Out of this figure, only 3.3% agreed that they have ever reported crime cases to private security guards (PSGs), while 85.3% said they have never reported any crime cases to the PSGs. They pointed out that private guards companies do not have the capacity and the facilities to handle crime situations and as such they think that they will not respond to such invitation; that they don't know the offices or contacts of private guards companies to reach out to them in case of any crime occurrence; and that it is only the public police that such crime matters should be directed to. In terms of rating the contribution of PGCs in crime control, 9% said the PGCs have done enough to control crime in the state, 71.3% said their contribution is good, but not enough to control crime occurrences, 10% said their contribution is minimal and can't prevent crime, while only 1.3% said the PGCs have done nothing to control crime in the state.

Given the rate of insecurity in Nigeria, 64.7% of the respondents advocated for a partnership between the public police force and the private guard companies, while 24% argued against such collaboration. On the topic of allowing private guards to carry arms, 57.3% said no to such gesture, while 31.3% agreed to it with reasons that; such weapons would help them protect themselves against the growing population of offenders in the Nigeria society, and will enable them tackle crime problems effectively. For those who said no to the use of arms by private guards, 12% said such weapons should not be given to the PSGs to avoid human right abuses, 15.3% said the PSGs are civilians and as such they should not be allowed to carry arms to avert the use of such weapons for criminal activities, 2.6% said their duties are mainly civil and as such they do not need arms to carryout civil duties, while 27.3% agreed to all the points raised against the use of firearms by the PSGs. Furthermore, majority of the respondents (75.3%) said that they do not know much about the PGCs and their activities to control crime in the state since no publicity is given to it by the mass media, 20%

said otherwise. (Table 2 at the Appendix for more details.)

Out of the 10 representatives of private guards companies invited for the Focus Group Discussion, only 8 turn up for the meeting. These are; Teskon Guards Nigeria Limited, Strict Guards Security Limited, Safeway Security and Technical Services Limited, Gofia Nig. Ltd, Spectrum Guards, Liberty Guards, Watchdog International Security and Safety Company Limited, and Emiwatt Guards. Here are their views in line with the study objectives:

The Role of Private Guard Company in National Security

Unanimously, all respondents agreed that the private guard companies have a role to play in ensuring National Security. Such roles according to them include;

1. Maintaining twenty-four hours surveillance over clients property to ensure safety
2. Assist in fire fighting
3. Providing intelligence information on crime to NSCDC for onward action
4. Act as first line defence in the protective chain
5. Liaise with other public security organization in crime prevention

Factors Militating against the effective performance of PGCs in Akwa Ibom State

Again, respondents highlighted the following to constitute factors inhibiting their services in the state;

1. Lack of cooperation with other public security agencies, particular the police who don't see them as being capable of performing security duties and at such harass them when they are in the field together.
2. Lack of cooperation from members of the public who do not regard them as security personnel and at such refuse to give them information on security matters. This point collaborates with findings in table 2, where majority of members of the public (85.3%) agreed that they have never reported any crime issue to private security guards.
3. Poor offer and lack of prompt payment by clients who offer them jobs. This according to them

contributes to delay of payment of monthly salary to their staff.

4. Increasing number of unregistered and unlicensed companies who infiltrate the business and have access to jobs rightly meant for registered and licensed companies.
5. Poor monthly emoluments given to guards by their employers. This according to them is largely caused by lack of regulation over a bench mark amount that should be paid to guards employed by the PGCs across the state or country. According to Adegoke[6] as noted in the literature section of this study, poor emolument has made a large number of private security guards in the country to have low job satisfaction, which has led to low job performance and lack of commitment to the job.
6. High licensing/registration fee charged by the government. According to the respondents, Category "A" of the private guard companies are required to pay ₦ 1, 000000 .00 for registration and collection of licence before commencing operation of security service in the country, while Category "B" are required to pay ₦ 800, 000 .00 for the same purpose. These fees according to them is high and it has driven qualified security men away from the business, while allowing only the rich who may not even have security background to flourish. Again, this finding collaborates with the view of Adegoke [6], who argued that such exorbitant fees charged by the government for registration/licensing of private guards companies in Nigeria will only make it difficult for many of these companies to pay and as well push them to operate without being registered. Thus, the implication is that if guards from the unregistered or unlicensed security companies err it will be difficult to apprehend them.
7. Lack of operational facilities such as vehicles, security gadgets like walky-talky, recorders, and cameras to aid their operations. However, respondents from Teskon Guards Nigeria Limited, Safeway Security and Technical Services Limited, Strict Guards Security Limited, and Watchdog International Security and Safety Company Limited, complained about the disapproval of government over the use of firearms which they said can guarantee their safety while in the field and also enable them assist the public security agencies to fight crime effectively.
8. Lack of support from government especially in the aspect of incentives and provision of operational facilities to aid their operations since they are also working to protect lives and properties that is the primary goal of any government.
9. Lack of publicity on the side of the media who do not in anywhere cover their security strides for the public to be aware of their activities. This collaborates with the findings in table 2 on the perception of members of the public towards the

relationship between public awareness through the mass media and the activities of private guard companies in crime prevention. 75.3% of the public said the media are not doing well in this aspect, while 13.3% said otherwise.

Relationship with public security agents in the State

Seven (7) respondents agreed that private guard companies' relationship with other security agencies in the state is cordial, while only one (1) from Spectrum Guard said such relationship is not cordial. According to him,

"Members of the Nigeria Police Force look down of us and continue to harass guards deployed to the same duty post with them, feeling that, we can't do the job".

The strength of the Private Guard Company Act in regulating activities of private guard companies in Akwa Ibom State

All respondents agreed that the current private guard company act is obsolete in some areas and it needs amendment. The areas they pointed out include;

1. Registration and licensing. Here they call for stiffer punishment for companies who operate without registration and license.
2. Use of Firearms. The respondents complain that they are exposed to danger while on duty post, that government should amend the Act to allow them carry arms like other security agents. On this point, respondents from Gofia Guards, Liberty Guards, Spectrum Guards and Emiwatt Guards did support the idea.
3. Staff Remuneration. Respondents called for amendment of the Act to include a bench mark of amount that should be paid to staff who works for private security companies in order to check poor remuneration and ensure uniformity of payment as it is obtainable in government service.

Government contribution in assisting PGCs perform well in their crime control bid

Most respondents were in support of government for allowing them operate as private security agencies in the country, and for providing an Act to ensure the maintenance of order in the course of their duties. However, they pleaded for support in the areas of provision of incentives and appropriate facilities to aid their work and assist them to apprehend unregistered and unlicensed companies from infiltrating on their work.

CONCLUSION

On account of current security challenges in the Nigerian society and the apparent inability of the public security agencies to contain the situation, the place of private guard companies in crime control has become a topic of interest to crime control and security experts. This study set to investigate the role of private guard companies in crime control taking into

consideration their operational challenges, their relationship with the public security sector, the strength of current Private Guard Companies Act in regulating their activities, what government has done to assist them in their attempt to control crime and as well as the perception of the public towards their activities. Therefore, to achieve a viable private security sector that could complement the activities of the public security agencies, the Nigerian government and the existing security agencies should give serious thought to a number of implication and suggestions stated in this work. It is believed that findings made in this study should assist policy makers, the government, non-governmental organizations, who should utilized the findings of this research to assist in solving most crime control problems associated with private guard companies in Nigeria.

Recommendations

The following suggestions and recommendations are put forward.

- First, government should select private guard companies through NSCDC that operate without registration and license and recommend appropriate sanctions on them that could serve as deterrence to others. This is necessary because the unidentified persons constitute serious security threat on the state due to their unknown identity.
- Second, government together with major companies in the private sector should assist in the registration and licensing of private guard companies as well as provide them with adequate facilities to assist in their security activities. This should assist them in their attempt to control crime.
- Third, security companies in the public sector should partner with the private security agencies to supply security services to the Nigerians people and foreigners residing or doing business in the country. Government should help streamline their functions in order to avoid overlapping of roles and incessant clashes amongst them.
- Fourth, government should assist through the collaboration of the NSCDC in the establishment and enforcement of a reasonable pay package which should be in line with the 18 % minimum wage paid to all government workers at every level to justify equitable standard of living for them.
- Fifth, government should assist the private guard companies to establish training colleges that will help meet the training needs of their staff, and the NSCDC should be mandated to take charge of such training institutes, thereby assisting the private security guards to imbibe

the proactive policing style that deals mostly on intelligence gathering.

- Sixth, the mass media should publicize most activities of the public security agencies as well as bring to limelight the activities of private security sector in order to sensitize the public on the role of PSCs in crime control. This is necessary in an effort to collectively contribute to sources with regards to emerging security challenges.
- Seventh, there is need for the private guard companies to come together and form association with a vibrant leadership structure. It is only when this is done that most of their demands can be collectively addressed through appropriate authorities for action. This is necessary with regards to poor wages they receive from clients who hire their services.
- Eight, government should ensure that everyone who owns or intend to own a private security company should have a Bachelor Degree in Social Sciences and Security Studies or first degree in other related fields. They could be ex-military personnel, police officer, or officers from other paramilitary agencies with appropriate knowledge to run such company. Also, guards employed by them should be persons who have passed through O' level exams and obtained basic certificates. This is necessary because security business is a serious job and it is not meant for novices.
- Finally, government should amend the existing Private Guard Companies Act to check those areas that appears obsolete. This is needed with regards to training, sanctions and appropriate facilities for effective security services in the region.

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Appendix

Table 2: Perceptions of members of the public of private security guards and crime prevention in Akwa Ibom State

| Questions | Responses | |
|---|-----------|------|
| | N | % |
| Do you agree that Private Guard Companies (PGCs) exist in Akwa Ibom State? | | |
| Agreed | 127 | 84.7 |
| Disagreed | 6 | 4 |
| Have you ever reported any crime case to Private Security Guards ? | | |
| Yes, I have reported a crime case(s) to the PSGs | 5 | 3.3 |
| No, I have never reported any crime case to the PSGs | 128 | 85.3 |
| If you indicated No for the above question, what are your reasons? | | |
| PSGs don't have the capacity/operational facilities to handle crime situations | 44 | 29.3 |
| I feel they won't respond to such calls | 16 | 10.7 |
| I don't know their office and their contacts to call for assistance | 21 | 14 |
| I think such calls should be directed on the public police alone | 19 | 12.6 |
| All of above | 26 | 17.3 |
| Ratings of PSGs contribution to crime control in Akwa Ibom State | | |
| Contribution good enough to control crime | 9 | 6 |
| Contribution good, but not enough to control crime occurrence | 107 | 71.3 |
| Contribution minimal and can't control crime | 15 | 10 |
| PSGs have done nothing to control crime in Akwa Ibom State | 2 | 1.3 |
| Considering the security challenges in Nigeria, would you agree that there is need for partnership between public/private security institutions? | | |
| Agree | 97 | 64.7 |
| Disagree | 36 | 24 |
| Do you agree that PSGs need firearms in the course of their duty? | | |
| Agree | 47 | 31.3 |
| Disagree | 86 | 57.3 |
| If you agree that the PSGs need firearms in the course of their duty, what are your reasons? | | |
| For protection against assault from hoodlums | 4 | 2.6 |
| To give them power to tackle crime problems effectively | 17 | 11.3 |
| All of above | 26 | 17.3 |
| If you disagree to the use of firearms by the PSGs what are your reasons? | | |
| To avoid human rights abuses | 18 | 12 |
| To avoid arming civilians, which can be used for criminal activities | 23 | 15.3 |
| PSGs are mainly for civil duties, they don't need arms | 4 | 2.6 |
| All of above | 41 | 27.3 |
| Would you agree that the activities of the PSGs are covered widely in the media to help prevent crime? | | |
| Agree | 20 | 13.3 |
| Disagree | 113 | 75.3 |

Source: Field Work, 2014