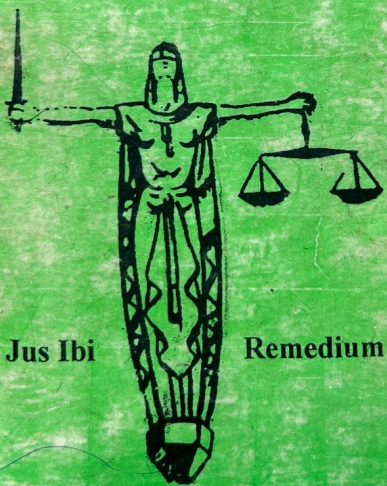
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THE DUTIES OF THE NIGERIA POLICE

NAJEEM YEMI IJAIYA*

INTRODUCTION

Police studies in Nigeria are still at their infancy both in quantity and in quality. This is however not a peculiar situation. Except for Britain, the situation is the same in other countries within the Commonwealth. The best evidence for this claim is the conference held at Birkbeck College, University of London on 19-20 May 1988 appropriately titled "Policing the Empire." It was organised to bring scholars with interest in the Police in ex-British Colonies in all parts of the world together for the exchange of ideas. Out of twenty-seven papers presented, only one was on the forces that existed at the Local Government level in many parts of Africa"[1]

The generally few scholarly works on the Police in Nigeria show two clear orientations, the historical[2] and sociological.[3] Of course, there is some overlap in this categorization. The common weakness in these studies includes their lack of any clear discernible perceptions of the Policeman and police work. They assume that the Policeman is known and identifiable in any crowd by his dressing which may or may not involve carrying arms. They also find it convenient to distinguish between the Nigeria Police Force (NPF) and the Native Administration Police Forces (NAPFS).[4]

DUTIES

The duties of the Police in their overall enforcement of law and maintenance of order are achieved in the following ways: -

1. Crime prevention methods
2. Investigation and detective activities
3. Prosecution
4. Traffic control and regulation
5. Public or community service.

1 Crime Prevention

(a) Beats Patrols

This can be done either by foot, bicycles, vehicles or on horsebacks and at times with Police dogs. A beat is the area which a particular or group of Constables is detailed to patrol during a single tour of duty. It may be a precinct in a city or town embracing as small as a couple of streets or roads, or as large as a mile radius, depending on the density of population, the known rate of crimes, the economic or administrative importance of the establishments or buildings in the area. In rural areas, it may be a collective of villages or hamlets or a stretch of miles of the national borders. [5]

The object of patrol is to disperse Police in a way that will eliminate or reduce the opportunity for misconduct and to increase the likelihood that an offender will be apprehended, while he is committing an offence of immediately thereafter. The strong likelihood of apprehension, no doubt, has a strong deterrent effect on

potential offenders. The fact of apprehension of the offender puts him in a pipeline of the prosecution process and may lead to punishment as mild as a caution, to as grave as his temporary incarceration or total elimination from society.

(b) **Other crime prevention measures**:

(i) **Anti Vice Squads**: - Operating in disguise (out of uniform) and carrying cut surveillance of areas that are potentially breeding grounds for gambling, keeping of brothels and solicitation of prostitution and similar vices. These squads also operate at large gathering, public places, motor parks, etc. Where theft from the person and thefts of bicycles, cars and petty articles have been found to be rampant.

(ii) **Stop, Detain and Search** [6]

A Police Officer on beat is expected to be vigilant and on his suspicion being aroused, he is empowered to stop, search and detain any person whom he reasonably suspects of having in his possession or conveying in any manner anything he has reason to believe has been stolen or unlawfully obtained or with reference to which an offence has been committed.[7] This mechanism, when scrupulously employed in a Police jurisdiction yields tremendous results for detecting offences and as much as preventing them.

(iii) **The Supervise System**

This system enables the Police to keep an eye on the movements and activities of criminals who on conviction

are sentenced to Police supervision on the expiration of their terms of imprisonment. The terms of the order of supervision compel the supervise to report to the Police in his activities of during the past month), to report to the Police when he desires to change residence from one Police jurisdiction to another and after much change to continue to report monthly to the Police of his new residence whilst in a particular area, he may not change his address without prior intimation of the Police.

(iv) **Species Escorts**

This is a situation in which armed Police guard large sum of money or explosive in transit. An example of this is the Police Escort that normally follows blank vehicles when carrying money from one place to the other. It is a service rendered free of charge to governmental or quasi-governmental agencies. But it is rendered to the private organsations and individuals on payment of fees.

(v) **Static Guards**

They are the Police stationed in Blanks or other important public places to check ingress and exist of customers and clients, e.t.c. They also prevent crimes in relation to such establishments.

(iv) **National (Internal) Security**

This set of Police Officers performing this function can be found in the State Security Service (Otherwise known as SSS). They are to keep surveillance on the activities of persons considered security risks. They are also to

prevent sabotage and subversion of the nation and its established institutions.

(vii) **Regulating Assemblies Processions, etc.**

This duty is performed by the Police to prevent likely breach of the peace and contain any tendency towards inciting and provocative acts, etc. By persons who had organised rallies or any other procession or gathering considered by the Government to be against public peace.

2) **Investigation and Detection**

Where beat patrol and other crime prevention methods fail to prevent an offence or apprehend the offender, the police resort to investigation. Some on-the-spot investigation is carried out by beat Patrolmen, but the Principal responsibility rests with detectives.

Investigation aims at identifying offenders through questioning victims, suspects, witness, and others, through confronting arrested suspects with victims or witnesses through photographs, or less frequently, through finger prints; and through laboratory or other expert analysis of evidence found at scenes of crimes or elsewhere.

The main legal guides in the conduct of Police investigations are the judge's rules which are well known among lawyers. Next come Police Administrative orders and instructions evolved over the years around lessons learnt from comments, criticisms and strictures by the Court on Police handling of specific cases and lastly,

advice from the Director of Public Prosecutions and other Law Officers.[8]

3) Prosecution

The Police, apart from the power conferred on them to prosecute, are also under a duty to see that the prosecution is done in accordance with the law.

4. Traffic Control and Regulation

Police duties and responsibilities in this regard are detailed in Section 30 of Police Regulations 1968 as follows:

a) the co-ordination of Police Traffic control duties in the area of responsibility of the Motor Traffic Division;
b) the advising of Local Authorities on the setting up of physical aids to traffic control;
c) the preparation of the plans of scenes of motor traffic accidents;
d) subject to the approval of the Inspector-General, the investigation of and prosecution of motor traffic offences; and
e) the maintenance of motor vehicle traffic statistics.

5) Public or Community Service

It is in this area, one finds duties patently outside the Police Concepts, or if within, are sometimes not readily appreciated by the Public.

SHD

ENDNOTES

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1. [1997] 11 NWLR (Pt 528) pp. 323 - 332
2. *Ibid.* headnote to the case.
3. *Ibid.*
4. Al - Amir, *Subul Al-Salam Sharh Bulugh Al-Marami* (Beirut, Dar Ihya' Al - Turath Al - Arab, 1960) Vol. IV, p.128
5. Ibn Rushd, *Bidayat Al-Mujtahid Wa Nihayat Al-Muqtasid* (Cairo, Halabi Press, 1960) Vol. II p. 464.
6. *Ibid.*
7. Ibn Arabi, *Akham Al-Quran* (Beirut, Dar Al-Kutub Al-Illimiyyah, 1988) Vol. I pp. 334 - 335
8. Imam Muslim, *Al-Jami' Al-Sahih*, (Beirut, Dar Al- Arabiyyah, undated) Vol.V p.128
9. Al Amir, *op cit.*, Vol. IV, p. 131.