

Organized Crime:

Voodoo Cults / Confraternities in Nigeria

By Orlando (Andy) Wilson, Specialist Security Consultant

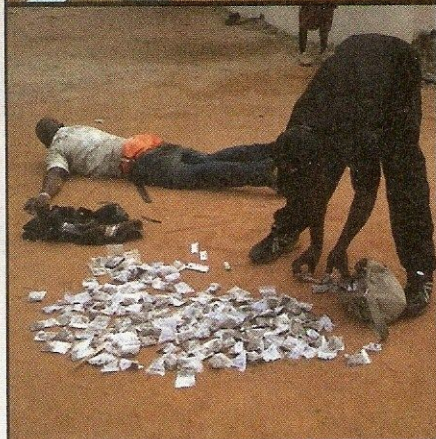
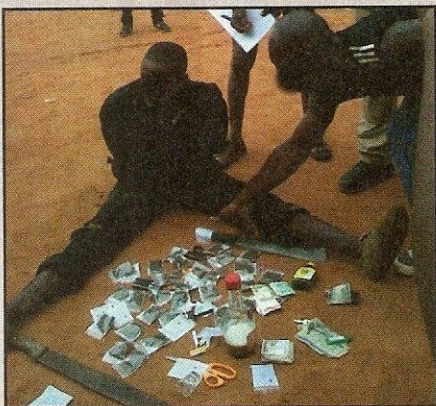
While working as a consultant in Nigeria in 2012, I came into contact with the issues that come from the "Cult Boys." The cults (confraternity) groups started off as university-based groups that were created as social organizations for student welfare. They are now mainly criminal gangs that are engaged in murder for various reasons, targeted rapes, kidnappings, extortion and intimidation, narco trafficking and political violence.

The cults use a lot of African rituals and magic in their initiation ceremonies and at their meetings. Ceremonies and meetings are held on specific days of the month, say the first Fridays or on Luna events such as a new moon. They take place at specific sites and shrines, generally in bush areas, and we had plenty of evidence these groups took decent security measures. The members were usually armed

with machetes and we usually found shotgun shells at the sites after ceremonies. To join the cults, potential new members had to be initiated and most of the time pay a fee. We had three boys who were arrested by vigilantes just as they were going to rob the home of one of their college professors; the reason—to steal a laptop computer so they could pay a membership fee to join a cult group. Their criminal careers did not get off to a very good start and were delayed for a while! For many people in supposed First World countries, such things as voodoo and magic ceremonies are just for Hollywood movies, but in a lot of places they are part of the main stream culture. I have encountered these beliefs in Africa, the Caribbean, Latin America and Miami! I respect others' beliefs and try to understand them as much as possible. This is a must if you're working closely with the

locals in these areas and should be considered in operational planning. One issue with voodoo and black magic ceremonies is that a lot of the time they require blood. On one of my first wanders alone in the bush on this specific job, I encountered some villagers who were concerned for my safety. One of the women in their community had recently been beheaded; no sexual assault had occurred but the head was taken. They believed the head was taken to use in a ceremony or to be buried with a dead tribal leader for the life to come! I have a lot of time for the people in the villages, who for the most part are very considerate and humble people, who have to deal with what would be classed in the developed world as extreme adversity on a daily basis.

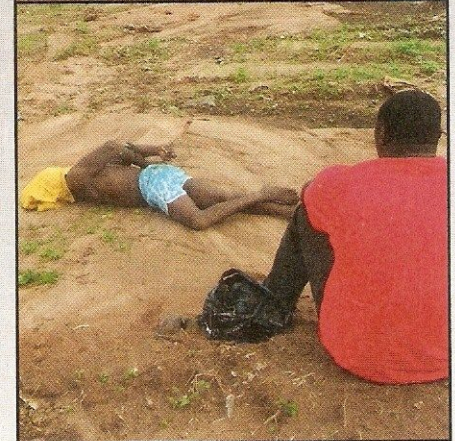
The initiation ceremonies for new members involve severe beatings, being cut



Domestic drug use and production is a large problem. These guys were arrested for selling / trafficking marijuana.

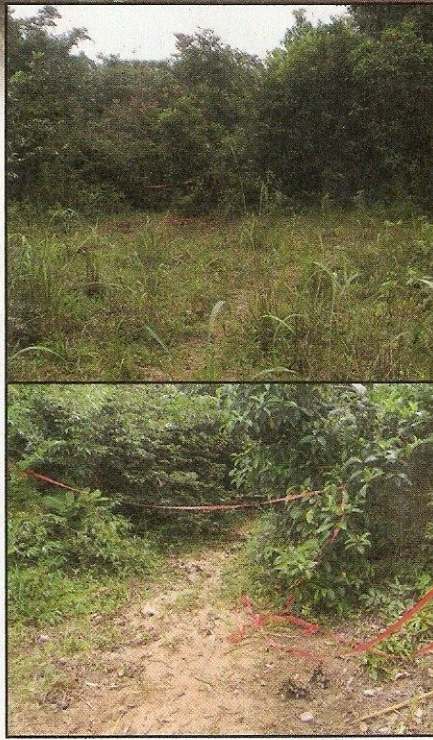


These Cult Boys caught with narcotics were detained by vigilantes We never had handcuffs; quite a few never wore shoes!!

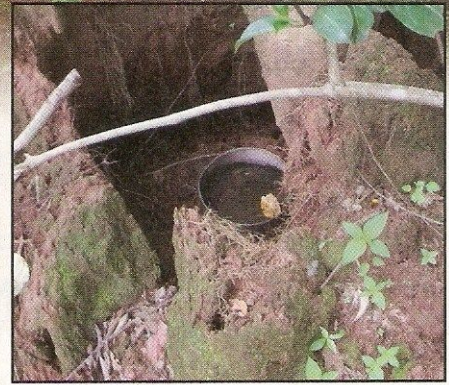




The above group, three guys and one girl, walked into a patrol while smoking weed. After being searched and questioned, it turned out the girl was going to be initiated into a cult. The guys had condoms to have sex with her (semen saved for other rituals), a ceremonial axe to cut her and rum and eggs to rub into the wounds.



At the sites were always ribbon, various colored candles, razor blade wrappers (never the blades) and rum bottles. If we came to a clearing and a couple of these items were lying around, we took it as there had been cult activity there.



Here is one ritual site that had been cut out of the bush; one day we found a blade (below) there, which was not common.



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Also at the more permanent site were pots and buckets of some description hidden in the bushes close by, used for mixing of their potions.



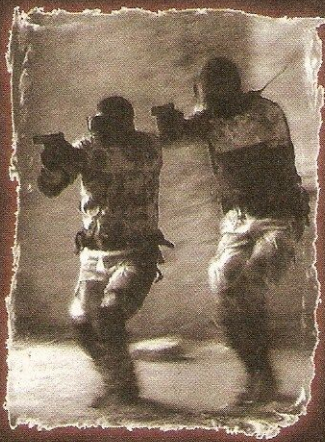
The site in the above photos was the largest in the most used in the area, from what we understood to have 50-100 cult members attending ceremonies.

and having rum poured on the wounds, and drinking potions of blood and other ingredients. Then additional initiation tests can include targeted rapes and other crimes as ordered by the new member's seniors. Female member's initiations also include having sexual intercourse with multiple male cult members.

The cults also work for political figures and parties as enforcers who, of course, pay them for their loyalty. The cults are very much part of the criminal structure in Nigeria but also have strong connections with influential political and government members. The cults offer their

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members protection and a springboard for a criminal or even a political career.

The issues with the cults, like most crime in Nigeria, can be confronted, but those in power very rarely want to engage. Most are too afraid to do so or are profiting from it. They are safer than most in their compounds anyway.

The following photos are of a cult ceremony site; on the night of the ceremony, we had a team manning a non-reactive observation post on a main track about 30 meters from the

site. Before first light they counted 18 young men armed with machetes leaving the area. The red ribbon marks the altar area; cult members also wear colored ribbons during the ceremonies.

I left Nigeria due to what can only be explained as the gross incompetence of those who employed me to go there. My time there working with the locals was interesting, enjoyable and educational. It's just sad that those in power have no interest for the common people beyond what votes they will give them. My limited contact with other foreign workers was mainly due to the fact they seem to all hide in their compounds, five star hotels and night clubs, for which, to be honest, I was grateful. How do they know the real situation if they are to frightened to take a look? But who cares about the real situation as long as you're getting paid?



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