

SMS Africa – Kenya – February 2016_1

Highway Robbery

There have been recurrent reports of a lone gunman robbing motorists while they are trapped in traffic. This case calls attention to the effectiveness, or lack of it, of alerting the police to crime through social media and other means.

GroundHawk_KE's tweeting record is interesting to follow:

Uhuru Highway is becoming notorious with people being robbed at gun point in traffic especially near Laico Hotel via @darsheet (GroundHawk_KE, 2016)

@KideroEvans @MikeSonko @kabetes please rid Nairobi off gun wielding thugs robbing Motorists on Uhuru Highway in traffic (HeatherNjuguna, 2016)

@NPSOfficial_KE please help us and secure Uhuru highway! We are being looted at gunpoint some of us have lost our lives. HELP! (Ma3Route, 2016)

A day after a person was shot, the police issued a warning through the mainstream media, which is echoed on social media:

Person shot while sitting in traffic on Mombasa road near South C turn off about 8 yesterday evening Several items stolen (Ma3Route, 2016)

#Kenya: Police warn of lone Nairobi highway gunman along Uhuru Highway and Mombasa Road <http://ow.ly/Xyieo> (Vatescorp, 2016)

At a different location, a group of thieves start to rob motorists in a traffic jam several days later. In this instance, the police *Twitter* account responded to a notification and outlined the steps that had been taken:

@NPSOfficial_KE @Josephboinet Are u aware that thugs steal from Motorists & then run and enter City Mortuary thru the wall along Mbagathi rd (TimMusumba, 2016)

Hi @TimMusumba We have notified our officers at Capital hill police station.
@JBoinnet (NPSOfficial_KE, 2016)

Another incident on Uhuru Highway at 8:45pm on February 11th, it appears to be the original gunman:

Another incident reported on Uhuru highway, this evening at 8.45pm. Single thug armed with a gun tried to rob a motorist stuck in traffic, 500 meters from museum overpass, inbound. Motorist revved car and honked horn until the thug gave up and ran off (Popcorn movement, 2016)

Incident reported on Uhuru highway, 8.45pm. 1 thug with gun tried to rob car in jam-- museum overpass, He revved car & honked horn n thug gave up (suemc_phee, 2016)

@suemc_phee As @NPSoOfficial_KE @APSKENYA always emphasizes, call 999/112/911 for quick police response, tweet later. Utilize undercover cops (GroundHawk_KE, 2016)

NPSoOfficial_KE did not respond this time, but GroundHawk_KE spoke on their behalf.

What became of the gunman or the gang cannot be deduced from social media.

A different kind of closure is illustrated in the next conversation. SafedrivingKE wanted to alert the police and would be travellers to the Ngong Hills that local police were behind robberies of visitors:

@Ma3Route disturbing news 4 those trying to go to #NgongHills beware cops at ngong station organise 4 climbers to b robbed @NPSoOfficial_KE (SafedrivingKE, 2016)

@Ma3Route @NPSoOfficial_KE 1 is required 2 inform Ngong Station b4 climbing, but everytime ppl do theres a robbery incident, 2+1 clearly not 4. Good morning (SafedrivingKE, 2016)

@SafeDrivingKE Kindly forward us more information to substantiate your complaint as we launch investigations. @Ma3Route (NPSoOfficial_KE, 2016)

@Safedriving called on others to give evidence of their experiences:

@NPSoOfficial_KE @Ma3Route u might want to get some info from @shecyclesnbi @olekibz there r also other complains not documented (SafedrivingKE, 2016)

@safedrivingke @ma3route @npsoofficial_ke @olekibz @shecyclesnbi .my group was a victim several years ago. got assistance from Kiserian PS (WambuguKanyi, 2016)

Kindly forward us information on the Ngong hills attacks for onward transmission to the area OCPD. @SafeDrivingKE @shecyclesnbi @olekibz (NPSoOfficial_KE, 2016)

As it turned out @shecyclesbi had been tagged incorrectly since her complaint was associated with a carjacking in Kilimani not robberies in the Ngong' Hills. A matter that she chose not to pursue when she found out that the perpetrators were allegedly Administrative Police:

@NPSoOfficial_KE haven't had a bad experience at Ngong' Hills, yet. carjacking incident was reported at Kilimani @SafeDrivingKE @olekibz (Shecyclesnbi, 2016)

@NPSoOfficial_KE opted out of the case and changed residence when I learned assailants were APs. No longer pursuing @SafeDrivingKE @olekibz (Shecyclesnbi, 2016)

@shecyclesnbi @NPSOfficial_KE @olekibz This is very disturbing, that very ppl mandated with public safety r 1s eroding it 4 own gain (SafedrivingKE, 2016)

We have agencies that deal with police Mis conduct. IAU,Jogoo Hse Ground floor and @IPOA_KE. @SafeDrivingKE @shecyclesnbi (NPSOfficial_KE, 2016)

GroundHawk_KE swooped in to defend the Administrative Police:

@NPSOfficial_KE @IPOA_KE @SafeDrivingKE @shecyclesnbi @olekibz Baseless allegations. Twitter is not IPOA or IAU or police station (GroundHawk_KE, 2016)

@GroundHawkKE @NPSOfficial_KE @IPOA_KE @shecyclesnbi @olekibz wondern what criteria u hv used 2 determine complains raised r baseless? (SafedrivingKE, 2016)

@GroundHawkKE @NPSOfficial_KE @IPOA_KE @shecyclesnbi @olekibz its bn noted u always come firing from the hip everytime cops r attacked (SafedrivingKE, 2016)

@SafeDrivingKE He is probably a cop. I don't feel like dealing. Thanks (Shecyclesnbi, 2016)

@shecyclesnbi understood, its above all mind numbing actually & totally not going anywhere, God help Kenya is all i can say (SafedrivingKE, 2016)

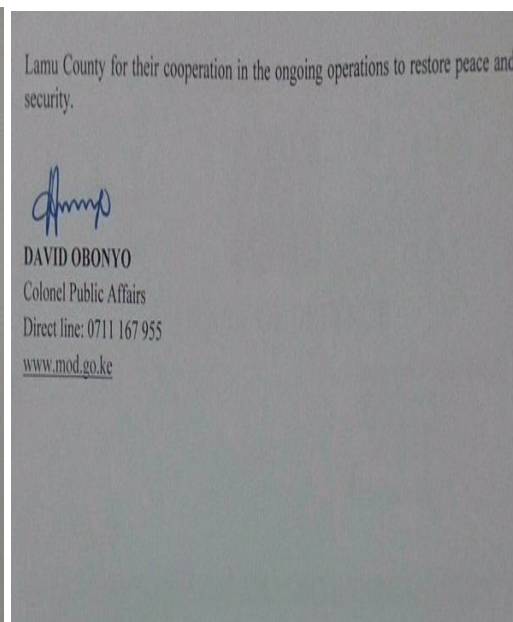
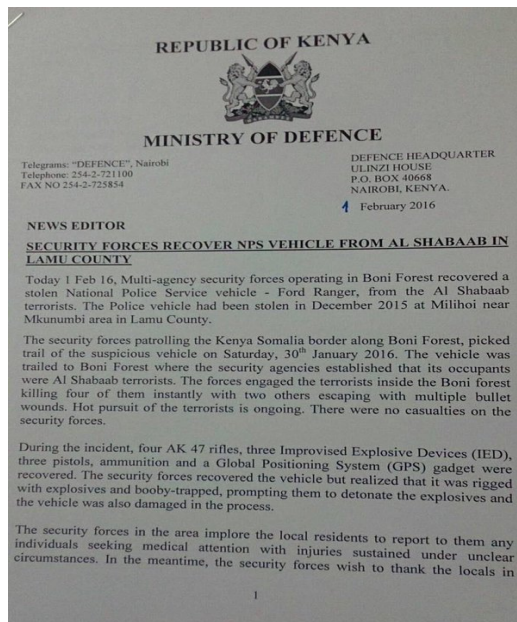
@SafeDrivingKE Kindly, I wish to exit this conversation. I chose not to be a victim by moving on. I'm happy with my decision (Shecyclesnbi, 2016)

The motivation of individuals interacting with police on these media, seems to be the hope that this version of access to them, will lead to action and resolution. That the representation of the institution online is much more benign and interested in solving problems than the on-the-ground, 'real' manifestation of police. There is disappointment when it appears to merely be a variant of the same-old police force. There is an upside to engaging with social media—it provides access to knowledge, often being produced in 'real time'—that gives one the opportunity to adapt to ensure personal safety, in this case, change their route home. This news will reach others later, through other means—word-of-mouth, mainstream media, etc.

Meanwhile, In Boni Forest...

The Ministry of Defence released news of success in Boni Forest. It did so through traditional means--a hardcopy press release. Word was spread by others on social media:

Kenya's Min of Defence say security forces trailed stolen police vehicle in Boni forest-killed 4 terrorists 2 escape (Samirasawlani, 2016)



4 Al-Shabaab militants killed in #BoniForest; stolen police vehicle, 4 AK-47 rifles, 3 pistols & 3 IEDs recovered (NationFMKe, 2016)

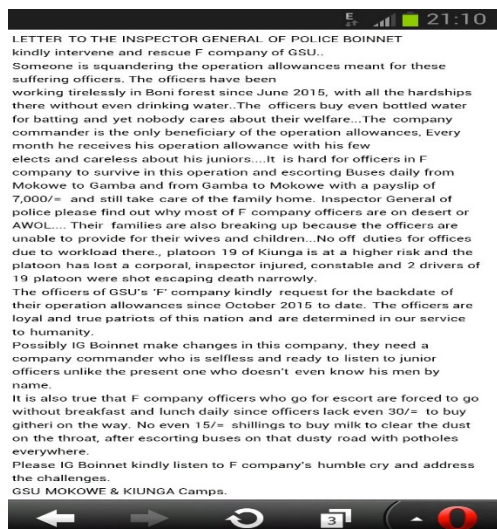
Coast regional coordinator Nelson Marwa vows to pursue and vanquish Al shabaab militants deep in Boni forest #K24NewsCut @laviniah_k (K24Tv, 2016)

No end in sight? Kenya military's "cat and mouse fight" with Al-Shabab persists in Boni forest (HarunMaruf, 2016)

@HarunMaruf "Cat & Mouse"? Are you an itinerant Alshabaabist or just ignorant? You know the expanse & location of the Boni Forest Complex? (Olenkare1, 2016)

Putting a damper on proceedings, Moderncorp had received a letter via social media from security officers who were complaining about their upkeep.

IG @JBoinnet is yet to respond to the cry of GSU officers in Boni Forest. PLEASE Share this letter widely (KenyaCitizen, 2016)



The message was retweeted 71 times. The ‘good’ news had not generated much conversation either. Though the ones who spoke of these matters were the doyens of social media, Ory Okolloh was one of those to retweet and speak about it. Notorious ‘blogger’ Robert Alai had received similar reports, a week or so prior:

Five months ago, some 300 police officers were deployed in Boni Forest to pursue Al-Shabab. These men were promised Ksh 6,300 daily allowance of which only 15 days worth the same has been paid. As the Police and Office of the President bosses sit pretty in Nairobi looting the Treasury, our brothers and sisters are being fed Ugali na Dengu everyday for the last 5 months. The people mistreating our men and women in uniform should be arrested. The Police boss must stop joking with Kenyans and get down to address the issues bedevelling the police force. If you don't want to be held to account, resign. Kenyan policemen are suffering in Boni Forest. You can escape addressing that by arresting me or you just sort the issue once and for all. (Onyango, 2016)

These stories represent information that traditionally would only have come to light through mainstream media, and then only if they chose to highlight them. But, now that we know what happens next?

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