



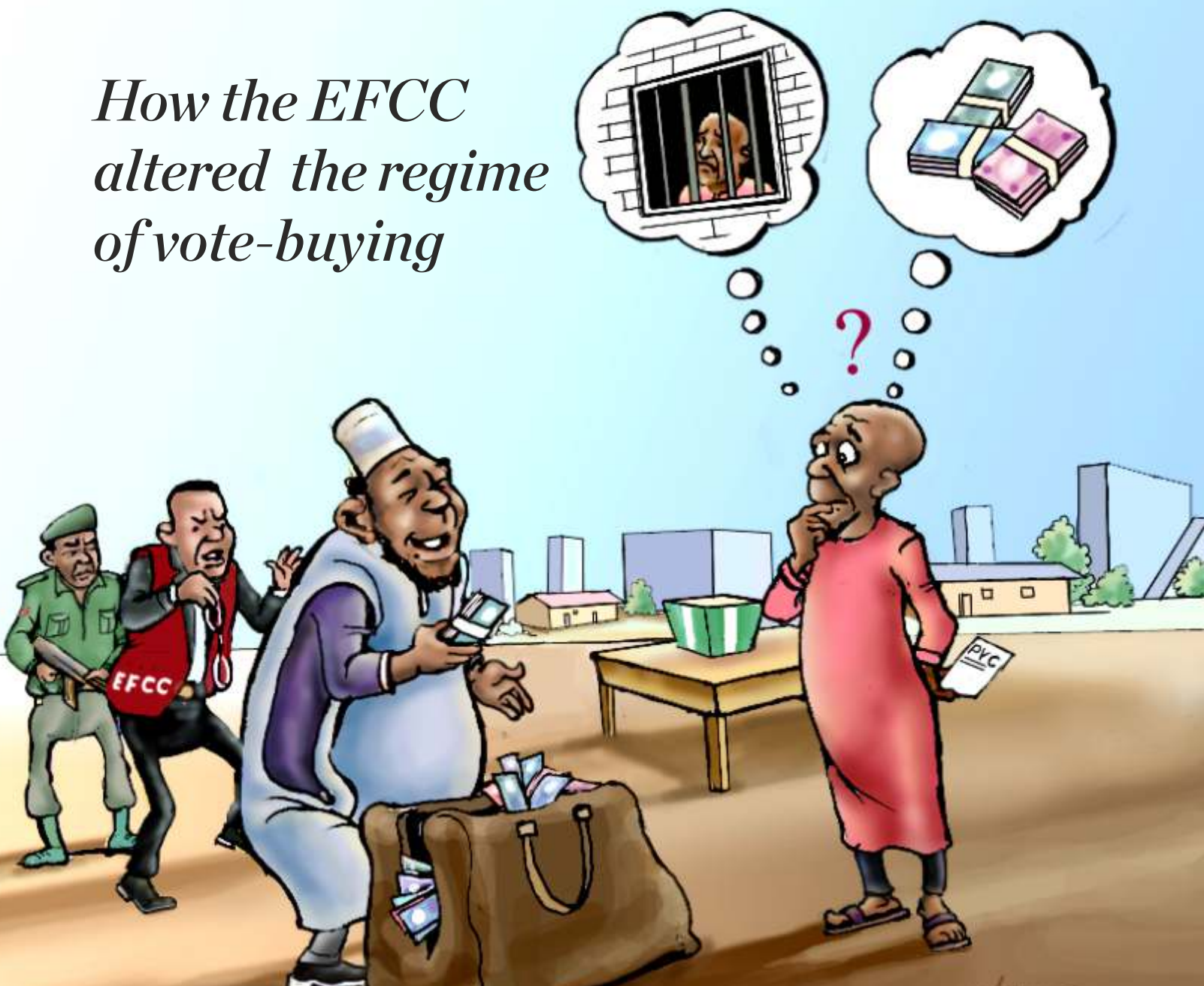
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2019 POLLS

The New Order

How the EFCC altered the regime of vote-buying





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IN THIS ISSUE

The New Order 3

The EFCC alters the regime of vote-buying, fondly referred to as “stomach infrastructure” and brings sanity to Nigeria’s electoral system



NIGERIA VOTES 2019
MAGU: MENACE OF VOTE-BUYING WILL BE CHECKED



Footprints against Vote-Buying 6

Sight of EFCC operatives across Nigeria to monitor the 2019 polls, sends shivers down spines of would-be vote-buyers, proving magical against the menace

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LEXICON

Vote-Buying

These two words, “Vote-Buying” may sound new to the lexicon of the Nigerian electoral system, but they have been in existence as far as democracy has been entrenched into the world system.

USAGE: Vote-Buying is simply the act of giving a reward (monetary or otherwise) to a voter to influence his/her voting in a particular way, or to persuade such a person not to vote at all, by exchanging the voter’s card for other gains. The card may then be utilized by the “buyer” for fraudulent purposes. In Nigeria, vote-buying also comes in the coinage of “stomach infrastructure”.

The world over, vote-buying is an electoral malpractice, and a major impediment to the conduct of a free and fair election. It stems from money laundering activities, as it usually involves the movement of huge sums of money to be used for vote-buying.

In Nigeria’s Electoral Act 2010, vote-buying is an offence in Article 130, which stipulates that a person who “corruptly by himself or by any other person at any time after the date of an election has been announced, directly or indirectly gives or provides or pays money to or for any person for the purpose of corruptly influencing that person or any other person to vote or refrain from voting at such election, or on account of such person or any other person having voted or refrained from voting at such election; or being a voter, corruptly takes money or any other inducement during any of the period stated in paragraphs (a) of this Section, commits an offence and is liable on conviction to a fine of N100,000 or 12 months imprisonment or both.”



The New Order

The EFCC alters the regime of vote-buying, fondly referred to as “stomach infrastructure” and brings sanity to Nigeria’s electoral system

BY SEGUN ADEOYE

Sunday, January 13, 2019 looked like any other day, but, in many respects, it marked the beginning of a new phase aimed at entrenching a new order in Nigeria’s electoral system. Venue was the Unity Fountain, Abuja, where the cool atmosphere and serene landscape of the park, provided an ambience of conviviality, as artistes and comedians took turns to use music and comedy to warn against the ills of vote-buying.

It was the first of such concerts, organized by the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission, EFCC, as part of a well organized strategy by the anti-graft agency, to check the menace of vote-buying in the buildup to the 2019 general elections.

Organized in partnership with popular comedian, Olanrewaju Toriseju, fondly referred to as *Ambassador Wahala*, the concert provided a rare opportunity for the EFCC to use music, performances, drama skits, talk-shows and comedy to sensitize the public on the dangers of selling their votes, as well as highlight the punishable offence of vote-buying.

Featuring various up-and-coming acts including comedians like Dr. Ayuba, Ghana Must Go, Koboko Master, Stainless, Washington, Mr Odey, MC 3310, Cee Dee, Charles Aworum, MC Philip, Asawana, Chucks D General, Nick B, Sam & Song, Funny Bruno, and music by Victor Velmo, Yung Fresh, Maisty Sanusi, Fortune Tunez, Braine and Magic Steppers. Participants including the young and the old, who gathered at the venue, were thrilled to exciting music and funfair, all laid with the important message against vote buying and selling. The event also had several posters positioned in strategic locations, some displayed by participants, with inscriptions such as: “Be Wise, Anyone Buying Your Vote is a Fraudster, Say No”; “Slavery begins by putting a price tag on your vote”; “Your vote is the future, don’t sell it”; “My vote is not for sale”, and, “Voter no be Seller”.

So it was that the seed against vote-buying was sown, and it soon grew beyond Abuja, culminating in the election monitoring role played by EFCC operatives during the general elections. It was a quiet, yet, emphatic revolution and campaign against vote-buyers that began from the grassroots.



Drama presentation at EFCC's 'Concert Against Vote-Buying'



Ambassador Wahala 'nabbed' for vote-buying during the drama presentation



Cross-section of concert attendees

The EFCC's Concert Against Vote-Buying, was replicated across the anti-graft agency's zonal offices, with the message adopted across the three major languages – Igbo, Yoruba and Hausa, as actors and comedians were engaged to join in the campaign, using their skills in spreading the message. In Kano, the Grassroots Corruption Fighters, the Independent National Electoral Commission, INEC,

and the National Orientation Agency, NOA, partnered with the EFCC to host the "Say No to Vote Buying" concert at the Race Course. Other agencies like the Nigeria Security and Civil Defence Corps, NSCDC, Federal Road Safety Corps, FRSC, Nigeria Police, Nigeria Immigration Services, were also tasked to partner with the EFCC in this regard.

In effect, the EFCC's campaign against vote-buying began more than a month to the Presidential and National Assembly elections, as well as those of the states' Governorship and House of Assembly elections.



INEC Chairman, Mahmood Yakubu, EFCC Chairman, Ibrahim Magu, and other officers during a courtesy visit to the Commission's Headquarters at Jabi ahead of the 2019 elections

Beyond sensitizing the public through music and the likes, the anti-graft agency, also partnered with the INEC, and the NOA, in their various anti-vote buying sensitization events.

As the agency tasked with ridding the country of any form of economic and financial crimes, the EFCC also had the added task of enforcing adherence by political parties and their candidates, to the

financial regulations and guidelines stipulated in the Electoral Act 2010.

The EFCC expanded its strategy to combat the vice of vote-buying, by engaging key stakeholders in the society, usually employed by politicians to corrupt the electoral system – the operators of Bureaux de Change, BDC and the Financial Institutions. The anti-graft agency rightly observed that they were easy accomplices to the unfettered flow of huge cash usually deployed for vote-buying. In order to break that money laundering chain, the acting EFCC Chairman, Ibrahim Magu, held several

engagements with BDC operators, as well as members of Nigeria's Financial Institutions, including the Association of Chief Compliance Officers of Banks in Nigeria, ACCOBIN, to send a stern warning that no accomplice of vote-buying would be spared from facing the full wrath of the law.

In his charge to the Managing Directors of Banks in Nigeria, Magu reiterated the roles and obligations of bank managers in curbing vote-buying as the elections approached, as well as checking illicit financial flows into and out of the country.

"In Nigeria, vote buying has reached an alarming proportion to the extent that politicians have now spread their tentacles to election officials, security agencies, election observers and even the media," he said, warning that it was no longer going to be business as usual as the anti-graft agency will prosecute any culprit.

In addition to charging them to desist from being ready tools in the hands of corrupt politicians, Magu, further warned the BDC operators to be wary of the influx of fake dollar bills, specifically brought into the country for the elections.

Magu said: "The intelligence indicates that the Dollar notes have features of genuineness, but forensic analysis by the Commission reveals otherwise.

"We therefore warn the BDC operators to be cautious in their transactions from now till the end of the elections." Like its two-pronged approach to the fight against corruption – prevention and prosecution, the EFCC's war

against vote-buying did not stop at the sensitization stage, as culprits of vote buying, are being prosecuted.

To serve as deterrence to would-be accomplices of vote-buying and bribery, the EFCC prosecuted two former staff of INEC, Christian Nwosu and Tijani Inda Bashir, before Justice Mohammed Idris of the Federal High Court, Lagos, for their roles in the sharing of the \$115 million largesse doled out by a former Minister of Petroleum Resources, Diezani Alison-Madueke, to influence the outcome of the 2015 election.

Nwosu was sentenced to seven years in prison on counts one, two and nine; and five years on counts three and four. Bashir bagged seven years on counts one and two; five on counts three and four; seven on counts five, six and seven; eight on count eight, and seven on count nine, to run concurrently.

Theirs is one in a series of several ongoing cases, in which the EFCC is prosecuting INEC staff complicit in the 2015 elections for various charges of bribery and money laundering.

For altering the order of vote-buying in the country, the Transparency Information Technology Initiative, TransparencIT, was full of commendations for the EFCC, for its role in checkmating vote-buying and other forms of corruption in the just concluded 2019 polls.

Frank Ogbu Ijege of TransparencIT, noted that prior to the interventions of the EFCC, "vote-buying has been a recurring problem in our elections, where the electorate are corruptly induced by political actors", but not anymore. ■



Head, Creative Communications, EFCC, Hajia Aisha Larai Musa, sensitising *Bureau de Change* operators on the ills of vote-buying



Magu with Compliance officers in Lagos



Convicts - Christian Nwosu and Tijani Inda Bashir, former staff of INEC



Footprints against Vote-Buying

Sight of EFCC operatives across Nigeria to monitor the 2019 polls, sends shivers down spines of would-be vote-buyers, proving magical against the menace

BY TONY EGBULEFU

Vote buying is a shade of electoral fraud that dawned in full bloom with last year's governorship elections in Ekiti and Osun states. This rigging concept in which agents of politicians or political parties arm themselves with cash to swing voters' choices at polling stations appear to be exclusive to Nigeria in the meantime.

Horrorifying is that politicians soon raised the bar in vote buying by making online money transfers to voters, even ahead of voting.

Vote buying and its different peculiarities such as the stage that requires the use of smartphones inside the polling cubicle by the compromised voter caught the interest of the global community as this year's elections drew on.

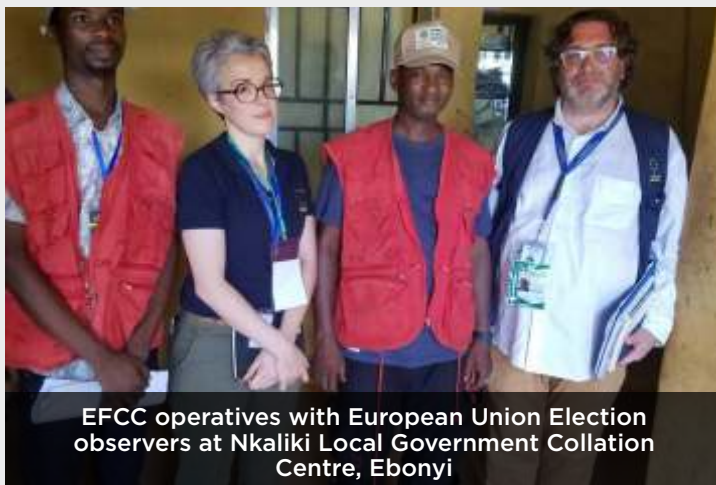
In the lead up to the Presidential and National Assembly elections, Marcella Damba-Saray and Joy Nopia, who

were Commonwealth Election Observers had to visit the Benin Zonal Office of the EFCC with a mission to get a better education on the issue of vote buying/selling and to know if the Commission had any plan to stymie the trend.

It was imperative that the Commission did something against vote buying because the act constituted a financial crime; yet in one fell, it subverts the sovereign will of the electorate and makes a mincemeat of the electoral process.

Speaking to the press as the clock wound down to elections, the Acting Chairman of the EFCC, Ibrahim Magu, noted that "vote buying is corruption that is fundamental because if you buy votes, it follows that you must recoup what you have spent, when you find your way into office."

"We're going to deploy our men in all the polling units in the country," he asserted. "I assure you we're going to do



EFCC operatives with European Union Election observers at Nkaliki Local Government Collation Centre, Ebonyi



Friday Ebelo, Head Ibadan Zonal Office leads operatives for the exercise



Election Monitoring Situation Room at the EFCC Headquarters, Jabi, Abuja



Officers of the Uyo Zonal Office along with other security operatives at Ikot Ekpene LGA

everything possible to check the menace of vote buying.” To walk the talk, the Commission released hotlines through which members of the public could report incidents of vote buying across the country.

Magu’s campaign against vote buying resonated across all the 14 Zonal Offices of the Commission, whose Heads escalated the message to voters in the 36 states of the Federation with the common denominator that vote buying is not just a financial crime, but a slur on the integrity of elections.

Handy in leading the Commission’s charge against vote buying from the zonal jurisdictions are Friday Ebelo, Head, Ibadan Zone; Umar Hadejia, Head, Abuja Zone; Mohammed Rabo, Head, Lagos Zone; Abdulrasheed Bawa, Head, Port Harcourt Zone; Garba Dugum, Head, Kano Zone and Michael Wetkas, Head, Gombe Zone.

Others are: Imam Usman, Head, Enugu Zone; Mailafiya Yakubu, Head, Kaduna Zone; Lawrence Iwodi, Head, Maiduguri Zone; Abdulkarim Chukkul, Head, Uyo Zone; Ahmed Lateef, Head, Sokoto Zone; Isyaku Sharu, Head, Ilorin Zone and Babalola Johnson, Head, Makurdi Zone.

A 24-hour Situation Room, furnished with the needed communication gadgets, and dedicated staff who

monitored and codified nationwide reports on incidents of vote buying from the Commission’s operatives, on election days, was set up at the EFCC Head Office, Jabi, and the zonal offices.

All through, officers kept vigil on all the proceedings, including counting and announcement of results at designated collation centres of the Independent National Electoral Commission, INEC, in order to ensure that money would not be deployed by politicians or parties to corrupt the process.

UYO

As the Commission’s operatives from the Uyo Zonal Office patrolled the polling stations in the states within the zone to monitor activities of agents of politicians and political parties towards ensuring that nobody sold or bought votes during the February 23 Presidential and National Assembly elections, the officers recovered a sheet of paper from suspected vote buyers in a polling station in Abak Urban, which contained 195 names of those suspected to have sold their votes. The suspected vote buyers evaded arrest by taking to their heels as soon as they sighted the Commission’s operatives approaching the polling unit. The monitoring exercise also extended to Ebonyi State.

PORT HARCOURT

In the Governorship and State Houses of Assembly election of March 9, operatives of the Commission from Port Harcourt's Zonal Office comprising Rivers, Bayelsa, Abia and Imo states arrested seven party agents suspected to be involved in vote buying. Six out of the seven: Ohiri Nnenna, Chigozie Innocent, Nwabueze Nkemdirim, Onyejekwe Chinonye, Ikemenogu Ijeoma and Iteghire Vitus were nabbed while operating as a group in Owerri. Found on them was the sum of N252,100, which operatives gathered were part of a fund for vote buying.

The suspects would be charged to court after further investigations are concluded.

The seventh agent, tracked down in Umuahia, the Abia State capital fled as he abandoned his vehicle on sighting EFCC operatives. Upon searching the car, the sum of N600,000 was recovered. At the Rivers State Collation Centre, Aba Road, Port Harcourt, officers of the Commission had to withdraw for safety reasons on

Sunday, March 10 following breakdown of law and order, at the centre.

GOMBE

Thirty-eight-year-old Musa Umar of Tudun Wada Ward in Dukku Local Government of Gombe State was arrested by the operatives of the Commission during the Presidential and National Assembly elections of February 23, for bribing a police officer with N3,000. The suspect claimed that one Babangida Bappah Chiroma gave him the sum of N20,000 for vote buying. He is already being prosecuted by the EFCC along with his accomplice, Bappa Ciroma before Justice Sa'ad Muhammad of the Gombe State High Court on a three-count charge bordering on conspiracy and bribery.

Abdulkadir Yusuf Rasheed, 55, the Chairman, Dukku Local Government, Waziri North Ward was also arrested for giving Umar the sum of N100,000 for delivery to agents of a particular party (name withheld) for vote buying.



EFCC Officers at INEC State Collation Centre, Aba Road, Port Harcourt, Rivers State



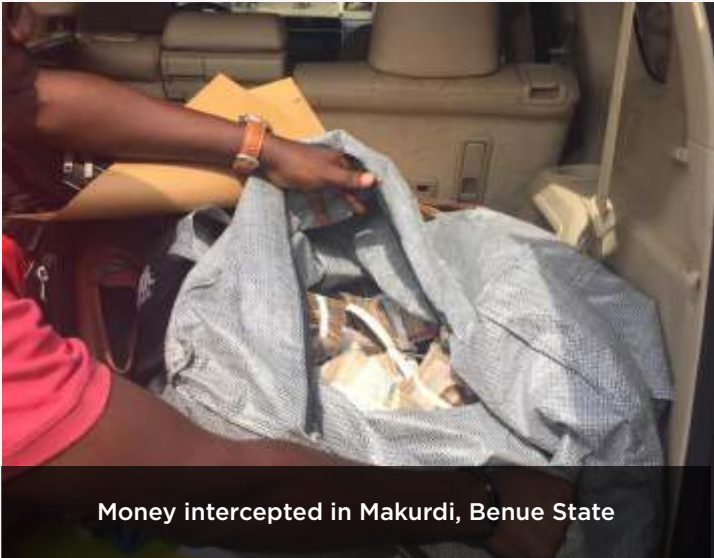
Party agents arrested by operatives in Owerri, Imo State and Umuahia, Abia State for involvement in vote-buying



Amadu Garkuwa and Ibrahim Abdul caught for vote-buying offence in Gombe



Some officers of the Commission's Gombe zonal office out on Night patrol ahead of the Gubernatorial and State Assembly elections



Money intercepted in Makurdi, Benue State



Garba Isah arrested in Maiduguri, Borno State with N300,000

MAKURDI

In North Bank area of Makurdi Metropolis, the Commission's operatives during the Governorship and State Houses of Assembly election sighted a scene that involved a man with large bags in his vehicle, which was later found to be filled with wads of cash meant for vote buying. In the process of arresting the driver and the money, his party thugs attacked EFCC officers, injured one of the operatives, who had to be taken to the Police College Hospital, Makurdi for treatment. The patrol bus of the operatives was also vandalized.

LAGOS

Operatives of the Commission from the Lagos Zonal Office, during the Governorship and State Houses of Assembly election arrested Sotayo Olatayo Johnson, a contestant for Abeokuta South1 Constituency in the state House of Assembly at Ijaye Park Polling Station, Abeokuta, Ogun State. Found with him was N1,709,000, carefully arranged in envelopes and stashed in polythene bags for distribution to voters. The monitoring exercise also extended to Oyo State.

MAIDUGURI

During the Governorship and State Houses of Assembly election, EFCC operatives from the Maiduguri Zonal Office, Borno State, arrested an agent of a political party (name withheld), at NYSC, Internally Displaced Persons Camp with the sum of N1,290,000. He was to compromise rival party agents with the sum of N50,000 each and dispense the rest to voters from Auno, Dalwa, Jakana in Konduga Local Government of Borno State.

Another party agent who was caught red-handed, distributing N300,000 to voters from Kukawa and Doron Baga in the Ali Monguno Teachers Village, Internally Displaced Persons Camp was arrested.

The agent admitted that "the money was given to me by a party chieftain."

In the course of his arrest, a vehicle belonging to an operative was vandalized by his angry beneficiaries. Five members of a political party (name withheld) from Abadan Local Government Area, Borno State, with 39



EFCC patrol bus vandalized by political thugs in Makurdi



EFCC operative injured in Makurdi



Head of Operations, Kano Zonal Office, Garba Dugum conducting pre-monitoring briefing



Head of Operations, Kano Zonal Office, flanked by other security operatives at a polling unit in Dala, Kano State



Abba Ali Abbari arrested in Konduga, Borno State with N1,290,000



Officers from the Commission's Lagos Zonal Office visiting polling units and scouring environs

Permanent Voters' Cards, PVCs and N25,125 belonging to a chieftain of the party in Yawu ward, disclose to be for vote buying. Similarly, five party agents within Borno town were arrested for inducing voters with money in exchange for their PVCs.

Investigations on the various incidences are ongoing, and those found wanting will be prosecuted.

The monitoring exercise was also extended to Yobe State.

KANO

Operatives of the Commission from Kano Zonal Office during Governorship and State Houses of Assembly election, arrested a politician in Kano over alleged vote buying.

The suspect was arrested at Chediya Uku Polling Station, Gwagwarwa Ward, Nasarawa Local Government Area of the state while he was distributing money to voters at the polling station.

The suspect will be charged to court as soon as investigations are concluded.

KADUNA

Officers of the Kaduna Zonal Office, successfully combed the state capital and the entire state to check acts of vote-buying during the elections.



Election Monitoring Team from Kaduna Zonal Office on a visit to the INEC office, Kalgo LGA, ahead of the Governorship elections



Officers from the Commission's Kaduna Zonal Office out on the Election Monitoring Exercise



Officers of the Benin Zonal Office on election monitoring duties



Sotayo Olatayo Johnson, contestant for Ogun State House of Assembly, caught with N1.709m



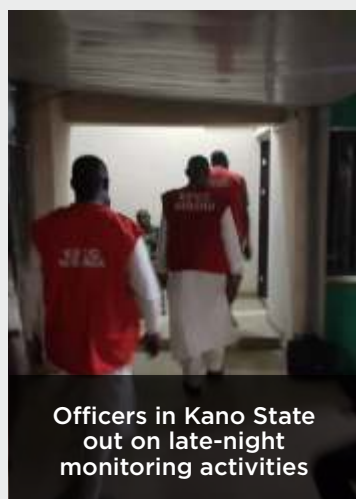
EFCC operatives monitoring election in Osogbo, Osun State



EFCC drone used for surveillance in Benin, Edo State



Abdulkareem Abdulsalam arrested in Ilorin, Kwara State for vote-buying



Officers in Kano State out on late-night monitoring activities



EFCC drone on surveillance in Benin, Edo State

BENIN

Technology was employed by the Benin Zonal Office of the EFCC, as officers engaged the use of drone as part of vote-buying monitoring exercise.

ILORIN

The EFCC's Ilorin Zonal Office as early as 9.53am on the Governorship and

State Houses of Assembly election day arrested a middle-aged man, Abdulsalam Abdulkadir, who was inducing voters with money at Unit 7, Kwara State Collage of Education Ilorin. Investigations are ongoing and he will soon be charged to court along with his accomplices. ■

Additional reports by **NWANYINMA OKEANU, DELE OYEWALE, AYO OYEWOLE, CHRIS OLUKA, WILLIAMS OSEGHLE, BABATUNDE SULAIMAN, THERESA NWOSU, JIDE JEGEDE, KASIMU YAHAYA, BELLO BAJOGA, GBENGA ADEWOYE, JAMILU SALE, IDRIS ISIYAKU AND IBUKUN AMUDA**



EFCC operatives on duty in Birnin-Kebbi, Kebbi State

WANTED



AYODELE OKE & FOLASADE AYODELE OKE

Ambassador Ayodele Oke and **Folasade Ayodele Oke** are wanted for offences of abuse of office, conversion of public funds and money laundering to the tune of over **\$43.4 million, £27,800 and N23.2million.**

The suspects are alleged to have knowingly concealed sums of money known to be proceeds of unlawful acts at an apartment at Osborne Road, Osborne Towers, Ikoyi, Lagos.

Charges were filed against them at a Federal High Court in Lagos on February 6, 2019, but they failed to appear in court resulting in the issuance of a Warrant of Arrest. All efforts to execute the Warrants of Arrest have so far proved abortive.

The suspects are now at large while all efforts to apprehend them have proved futile. 64-year-old Ayodele Oke and 61-year-old Folasade Oke speak Yoruba and English Languages fluently.

Their last known address is House 17, Unity Estate, Karu, Abuja.

Anybody having useful information as to their whereabouts should contact the Commission in its Abuja, Benin, Enugu, Gombe, Ibadan, Ilorin, Kaduna, Kano, Lagos, Maiduguri, Makurdi, Port Harcourt, Sokoto and Uyo offices or through the number: 0809 3322 644 (0809 EFCC NIG); its e-mail address: info@efccnigeria.org or the nearest Police Station and other security agencies.

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