

Greetings from Ghana #44

The Skies May Be Friendly, but Parts of the Land. . . Not So Much

A few years back there was a report of 18 weekend murders having taken place in a city in the U.S. and it made media attention all over the place. After the hoo-hah settled it was quietly revealed that there are 25 murders on average every weekend in Chicago. The shock and dismay associated with the initial story never quite made the papers with the Chicago revelation. Sometimes the news isn't really news.

There was a megachurch in Illinois a couple decades back that had a powerful anti-gay minister as its leader. He was a strong social influencer in the Chicago suburb. Every Sunday he would preach to about 3500 and often morality was somewhere in the sermon. He was highly regarded. . . until he was caught in a Florida men's room going against his sermon.

It is typically considered that those who protest too much are themselves afraid of their feelings and have great self-loathing and self-hatred. Sam George, the politician who hates most everything and is very, very loud in his opinion just got a bill through the Ghanaian Parliament that promises to punish homosexuals for crimes against the norms of society. That within itself might be bad enough, but in looking at the bill you discover that not only is there prison for anyone caught in the act there is also prison for anyone who supports or allows the behavior on their property, anyone who knows of homosexuals and does not report them, and even if someone has the intent to commit such an act by dressing in the clothing of the other gender. Of course there will be legal challenges, but oh, how I wish there was the equivalent of the Florida men's room here.

The current president has now decided that if anything is proven wrong or corrupt in his administration then it is his fault and the people should allow the party (NPP) to stay for another four years to correct it. This came a short while after the opposition party (NDC) has promised that if the current party does not retain power, they will prosecute the president for a hefty list of crimes.

Climate change is becoming evident here. It was one thing when the rainy season changed by a few weeks. Then the dry season, Harmattan - the winds and dust storms off the Sahara, changed. Now temperatures are climbing to the point that there are heat warnings. People are being cautioned to stay hydrated and to make sure their animals and young children stay hydrated as well. And there are warnings being circulated about hazards created by the heat.

**"SNAKES SEASON! BEWARE, IT IS SNAKE SEASON!
DUE TO THE HEATWAVE AND HIGH TEMPERATURES CURRENTLY EXPERIENCED,
SNAKES, ESPECIALLY COBRAS, SEEK REFUGE IN COOLER PLACES LIKE INSIDE
HOMES."** (it continues)

“SAFETY TIPS

1. Avoid leaving windows open for too long. Cobras and Mambas can reach heights that are very high.
2. Avoid leaving your front doors open for fresh air in the evenings. These reptiles are absolutely STEALTHY (too quiet). You won't hear or see them go inside your house.
- 3 Before sitting under the tree that has that cooling shade, check the branches that there are no snakes lurking in the branches.
4. Check your bed and surrounding before you go to bed, cobras are notorious for hiding under the sheets.
5. Avoid the age old trend of liking to chill outside of the house, with mattresses and wrappers in the evening. Most reptiles are nocturnal (hunt at night and more effective)
6. Not only snakes might bite you, but also the age old human enemy; the centipede (Mosithaphala), which is fast and very venomous.
7. Clear bushes round your house. They attract rats and mice which are the favourite snacks of the most dangerous snake's favorite meal.
8. Buy snake repellent powder and pour it round your yard. You will definitely decrease the chances of a snake ever visiting your home by 90%.

Beware of confronting snakes that get into your homes. Some snakes can be killed easily, others like the black mamba are very cocky. If threatened, they will chase you at an alarming speed and give multiple bites while still on the chase; and bitten victims may not live to see the next forty minutes. So, just be very careful when trying to kill those snakes.

Stay well and be safe. It's snake season. It's very hot and they are highly active and get agitated and angry very fast.”

One of the advantages (if you can call it that) of living in the house I am in is that the area around it is completely tiled and there are no shade trees. The mosquitos are so bad and malaria is reported frequently by friends so we close all the doors in late afternoon even though it does not allow the house to cool as quickly in the night air as it would otherwise.

The current politicians keep saying that things are going well and the economy is thriving. Their words are empty and echoing as they also keep adding more and more fees and value-added-taxes and the common person sees their money getting less and less valuable. The

cedis keeps falling. And now we have a rise of a different problem. Like the heat it has been around but also like the heat it is becoming more prolific, especially in the rural areas between villages and towns. Warnings are being sent out.

Summarised opinion on

Kidnappers, their modus operandi and way forward, (These are, however not all on the matter)..

Groups recently implicated= Herdsmen, sakawa boys, unemployed youth, money ritualist etc.

Target population= Anyone, no age or religious barrier.

Primary gain= Obedience to hierarchical tendency. Secondary Gain= Money.

Area of Action= 1. Highways 2. Interstate roads 3. Trunk B roads 4. City outskirts

Modes of operation: 1. The Spy/ Syndicate System 2. The Collegiate system 3. The Crude Brute System

1. The Spy System

Who are the spies?? A. Law enforcement agents. B. Jobless road repairers. C. Busy bodies sitting at road junctions.

Mechanism of Action..

Unauthorized peeping inside the car by any of those listed above in order to;

1. Identify wealthy individuals 2. Identify presence of armed guards 3. Rating of vehicles as a measure of wealth 4. Isolation of all govt registered vehicle as a MUST for kidnap, even if with driver alone.

Means of Action by Spies; 1. Undue friendliness at contact 2. Undue familiarity 3. Unwarranted/ unsolicited waving @ you. 4. Presence and Fiddling with phone by one or all of these spies at contact. 5. Eventual call to Kidnappers in front for action.

2. The Collegiate System

In this case the kidnappers are of the same tribe working together at very short distance to each other.

Mechanism of Action.

You suddenly see a man in front of you beside the road in an unexplained area, that is an area leading to nowhere. When you move close to him and after sizing up your car from afar he enters the bush again in your presence. He then call his colleagues who are at a very short distance away to effect the kidnapping.

Please note the moment you see this group of kidnappers in front, you have already walked into an ambush as some of them are already behind you.

Any reverse = death.

3. The Crude Brute System.

Latest entrants into the kidnapper's strategy. These types are crude and very brutal. They are great risk takers. They care less about security agencies. They work alone and kidnap anyone they see No matter how poor. They have no time to access anyone.

Mechanism of Action..

They jump at any road of their choice at anytime of the day and start shooting at any incoming traffic, no matter the speed. They kill as many as those hit by bullets at random and carry away those who survive the wreck that ensued after the shooting.

Post Kidnapping

After kidnapping, the kidnappers make everyone to understand that they are in serious business by; 1. Incessant Threat language at gun point 2. Regular slaps 3..Removal of Shoes and slippers of victims to make them miserable while walking on sharp stones, thorns, shrubs etc to create injuries on their feet <sic> to ensure early soberness. 4. Walking in circles for hours to disorient the victims in terms of time and place and position. 5. Late initiation of negotiation until the victim is thoroughly sober and dying slowly. 6. Release after collection of ransom. 7. Death.

Special cases. Death after Ransom This occur rather too often in some cases.

Causes of Death; 1. Exhaustion 2. Ongoing medical ailments at the point of kidnap 3. Snake bites and bites from other poisonous animals in the bush 5. Dehydration and acute renal injury 6. Hemorrhage from Multiple gang rapes, for women. 7. Gunshot from the kidnappers due to: 1. Attempt to escape 2. Too Weak victim who cannot move again.

Why they still collect ransom after death.

The kidnapers see each operation as an investment and hence no matter what happens to the victim they still want to maximize the gains of each operation.

Can kidnapers release a victim without collecting ransom?

Yes, very possible. This is common in the spy system. Where the spy called them and said that they have kidnapped the wrong person or that the person kidnapped will generate too much heat and stress for them from the security agencies or from the community.

An example avail of a person kidnapped and was later released and given transport money the following day by the kidnapers when some issues arose.

Best way to handle kidnapers.

1. Avoidance 2. Avoidance 3. Avoidance 4..Once kidnapped you have lost all control. If you attempt to escape you get killed, if you Don't try to escape, you may STILL die..5. Avoidance at all cost

WAY FORWARD

1. Youth Employment opportunities 2. National Disorientation and Reorientation in tribalism 3. Regular and permanent highway patrols at 10 minutes intervals with policemen in mufti 4. Increase wages and motivational weapons for policemen 5.. Rapid response helicopter with night vision equipment 6. Stringent punishment for kidnapers and conspirators. 7. Community anti kidnap policing. 8. Close audit and Cctv monitoring of law enforcement agents in charge of armory 9. Employment of spy agents across communities. 10. Prayer

Please be aware, folks, that I travel infrequently outside the city. When I do it is by bus, airplane, or in a vehicle that reeks of authority (going to see the tribal leaders up north). You need not fear for me.

All of this does not mean that the country or the people are not welcoming or pose a disadvantage. Like Chicago, things happen and always will. If you don't know about it, it is news. If you do, it's part of life where you are living. And living here still makes me smile.

