

Police in Imo state kill suspected kidnap kingpin

A SUSPECTED kidnap kingpin, Sampson Okwudirigbo, was said to have been terrorising Imo residents from his base in Port Harcourt, has been shot dead.

The Police Spokesman in Imo, Mr Linus Nwaiwu, told newsmen on Sunday in Owerri, that the suspect was trailed to his girl friend's house in Port Harcourt, where he was shot while attempting to attack the policemen who went for his arrest.

Nwaiwu said the kidnaper, whose remains were seen lying on the premises of

the police headquarters, Owerri, died while the police were bringing him back to Owerri in the morning.

The police paraded a member of the gang, who hailed from Ohaji/Egbema Local Government of Imo and said to be Okwudirigbo's point man in the state.

Police claimed that the gang was responsible for some of the kidnap cases in different parts of the state in recent time.

The police also said that it smashed a syndicate,

which included a member of staff of a new generation bank in Owerri, that specialised in the use of the cell phone to extort money from unsuspecting members of the public.

The bank official and his girl friend also in police net, reportedly conspired with two other members of the syndicate to extort N500,000 from one Mrs Margaret Oparaigo.

Speaking with newsmen, the alleged leader of the syndicate, Master Maxwell Ndubuisi, admitted that he sent a text message

to Oparaigo, demanding the payment of N1 million ransom or risk the kidnap of her husband, Mr Vincent Oparaigo.

Ndubuisi further said their "claim that we are hired killers" in the text was meant to put fear in the woman and make her pay the money, "but added, "I cannot hurt a fly."

Police said Oparaigo, complying with a directive from the syndicate, later lodged in N50,000 into a bank account, allegedly opened by the banker's girlfriend, with a different name, Victoria Nneka Okoro.

Oparaigo later alerted the bank, urging it to "track down anyone who makes enquiry about the account."

"It was when the girl friend came to withdraw the money that police arrested her," the police spokesman said.

The accomplice confessed to newsmen that she was persuaded by her banker friend to open the account "to enable his friend (Maxwell) access some money he was expecting."

Meanwhile, the command on Saturday took delivery of two new 4X4 Ford Ranger vehicles donated by an Abuja-based company to assist it in the fight against crime in the state.

The executive director of the company, Mr Tony Orji, while presenting the vehicles to the Commissioner of Police, Mr Alloy Okorie, said that the gesture was the company's contribution toward crime reduction in the state.

Receiving the vehicles on behalf of the Inspector-General of Police, Okorie pledged that the command would deploy them to effective use.

He gave the assurance that the command would not relent in its efforts to bring "crime and criminality in the state", especially kidnapping, to the barest minimum.

Jonathan tasked on infrastructure

ANTHONY OMOH

NATIONAL Coordinator of the Nigerian China Business Council, Chief Matthew Uwaekwe has urged President Goodluck Jonathan to address challenges of economic, infrastructure and crisis in the power sector, if he is to set the stage to contest for the Presidency in 2011.

This is just as he described as shameful, undemocratic and unparliamentarily; the lingering fracas in the House of Representatives, leading to the indefinite suspension of nine members.

According to Uwaekwe, the President must first deliver on the agenda of his administration by putting in place a solid foundation for economic and political stabilities, before trying to actualise another term in office.

He said: "Jonathan has right to contest. But, I would wish he focus on stabilising the economy, by addressing issues of infrastructure, the energy crisis, for which he has declared emergency, it will be the best, because if the foundation is weak, there is nothing that can be achieved."

On the crisis in the House, Uwaekwe explained

that the attitude displayed by the law makers calls for worry, judging by the gravity of the allegations, which he said is yet to be proven, could cast aspersions on the integrity of the legislative arm of government and by extension the image of the country.

While calling on the relevant government agencies to investigate the allegations, he explained that if the crisis in the House of Representatives is not properly handled, it could send negative signals that the youthful leadership at the lower house could truncate the agitation by a section of politicians that generation change is key to the leadership deficiency in Nigeria.

"What happened in the House of Representatives calls for worry, and I am deeply concerned about the development. Most of the allegations are yet to be proven, but it is sad that people supposedly elected to represent their people are portraying the image that is not good for this country. If the allegations turn out to be true, the leadership of the House will have itself to blame, as having disappointed the entire

nation. They would have disappointed the youths of this nation, because Bankole represents the younger generation, it will be shameful if the allegations are not handled carefully, because the youth are the leaders of tomorrow the former member of the House of Representatives said..

On the appointment of a new Chairman for INEC, Professor Attahiru Jega, Uwaekwe said: "Jega should know that Nigerians are looking forward to him to conduct credible elections where the votes of the people will count. The people that have nobody to speak for them want their votes to count, such that only credible and responsible people could hold positions of leadership."

"He should not let down the confidence reposed on him. Jega should ensure that only good people who truly win elections are declared as winners. He should not allow his conscience be mortgaged, he should carry out his assignment as a beacon of hope, by using the INEC Chairman's position to rekindle the optimism of the masses, that it is possible to have free and fair elections in Nigeria" he added.