



# Murder in the Oil City...

• Father of three, pursued, killed by soldiers in Warri, Delta State

IF the father of three had had a premonition of the fate that awaited him that afternoon, he would have avoided the route that became his cul-de-sac.

He could even have avoided the trip altogether with his friend that has brought sorrow, tears and blood.

But that is the way of mortals. They never can tell the fate that awaits them at any time. They walk into calamity literally blindfolded.

That may be true of Mr. Michael Mac-Asore said to be in his mid-forties. But his could also be said to be cold-blooded murder.

All the facts so far about the death of the suave father of three, point to a senseless murder by soldiers who are paid to protect civilians and maintain peace. The soldiers belong to the Joint Task Force (JTF), otherwise code-named: *Operation Restore Hope*, based in Warri, Delta State.

This is in spite of the defence of his men by the Commander of JTF that the murdered Mac-Asore and his "escaped" accomplice "fired shots" at soldiers at a checkpoint after charging through the roadblock.

The road to bulky Mac-Asore's sudden end began on April 25.

He had embarked on a business trip to Ughelli, about 30 kilometres south-east of the oil city of Warri, in company of a bosom friend, Mr. Christopher Agbaraferere.

Mac-Asore drove his car, a BMW registered FJ 840 KJA. They reportedly went to ALCON Nigeria Limited.

After the transaction the duo reportedly started the journey back to Warri. However, when they got to Okere-Ugborikoko Road, off Airport Road, they discovered that some men in a car behind were chasing them.

They thought the men who were chasing and shooting at them were armed robbers until his friend (Agbaraferere) looked back and saw that they were soldiers. He reportedly told Mac-Asore who was driving to stop because the men chasing them were not armed robbers but soldiers.

Mac-Asore thereafter stopped the car while Agbaraferere came down first with his hands up, telling the soldiers that they were not robbers and harmless.

As he was trying to explain, Mac-Asore also made to come out of the car. The soldiers suddenly opened fire on him at close range, without asking questions and Mac-Asore fell down and died in the hail of bullets.

He was another statistics in the gory list of deaths from mistaken identity.

Agbaraferere and the deceased body of his friend were bundled by the soldiers into their vehicle and taken to the Army Barracks at Effurun, in the outskirts of Warri.

In the secure barracks, Agbaraferere was interrogated and allegedly tortured by the soldiers before he and the body of Mac-Asore were taken to Ekpan Police Station on the allegation that they were fleeing armed robbers.

It was learnt that the deceased's vehicle was riddled with bullets. It was also later found to have been thoroughly vandalised before it was driven to the Ekpan Police Station.

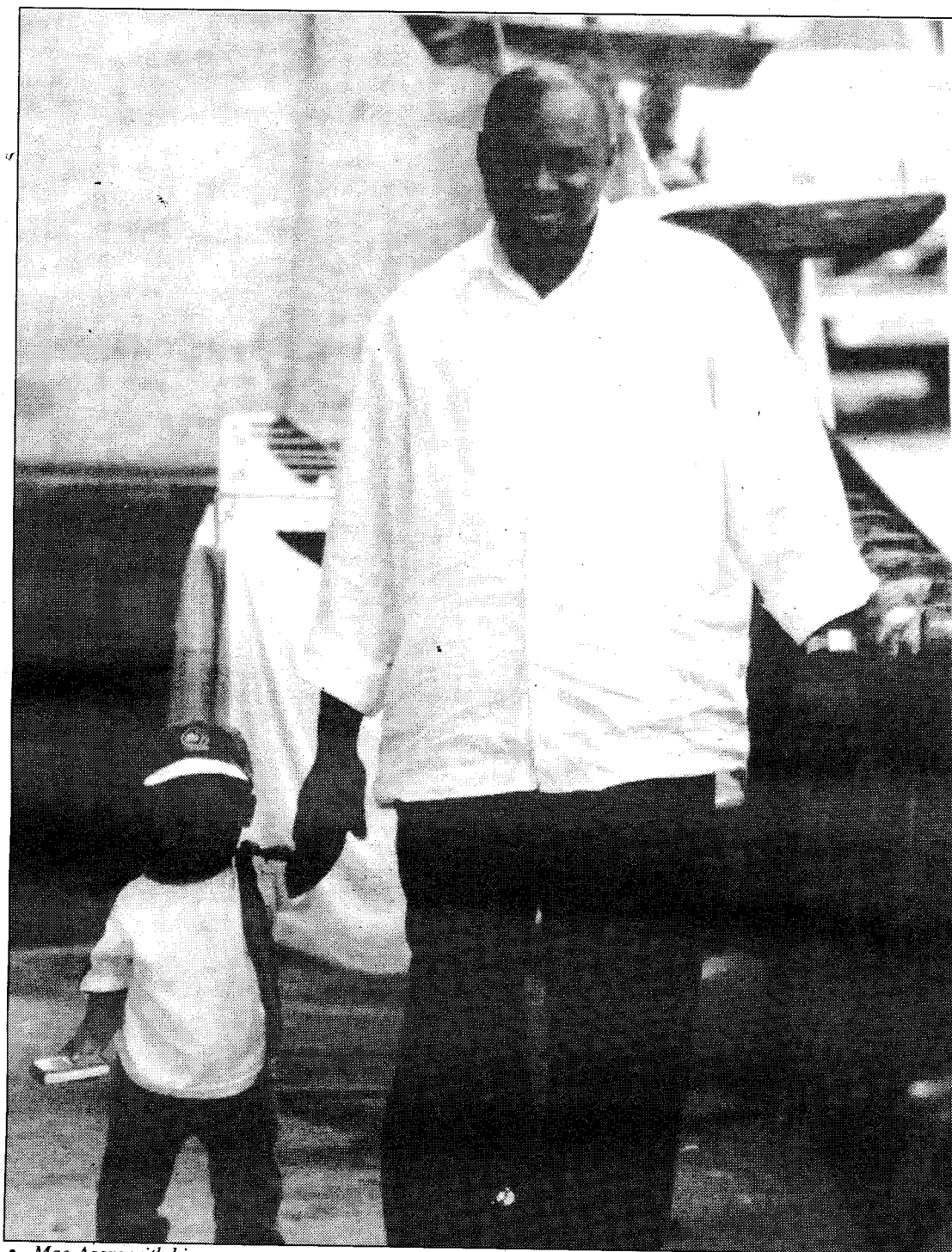
His two Global System of Mobile (GSM) communication handsets as well as undisclosed cash in his car were allegedly removed before it was driven to the police station.

The *Guardian* learnt that the batch of soldiers that killed Mac-Asore were newly posted to the Airport Road, by Sokoh Estate junction at Effurun, at the time of the incident.

The Commander of the JTF, Brig.-Gen. Lawrence Ngubane, who resumed duties only last month, told *The Guardian* during an interview at his Operational Headquarters, Effurun, Delta State that the soldiers at the checkpoint said that the occupants of the BMW car charged through the checkpoint and shot at the soldiers.

This, he explained, prompted the soldiers to give the car a hot chase and that when the car stopped due to an obstacle on the road, one of the occupants of the car escaped.

Gen. Ngubane said it was the "misdemeanour" of Mac-



• Mac-Asore with his son

From Chido Okafor, Warri

Asore that led to his being shot.

He also disclosed that four live rounds of bullets were found inside the BMW car.

The Commander wanted to know if really the men (in the car) had nothing to hide why were they running when his soldiers were chasing them?

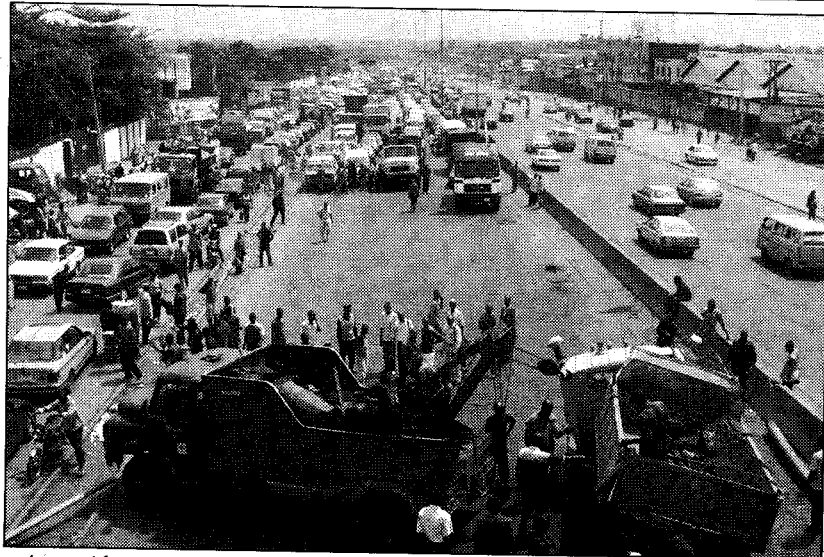
At the Ekpan Police Station were the remains of Mac-Asore and his friend were taken to, a senior police officer who spoke on condition of anonymity, said the matter had been taken over by the Police Command Headquarters in Asaba. He urged any journalist interested in

the matter to go to Asaba for details.

But Mr. Festus Ukeje, a friend of Mac-Asore and Coordinator of the "Committee of friends for late Michael Mac-Asore", described the action of the soldiers as "bloodthirsty".

He said: "We demand the prosecution of these bloodthirsty soldiers who cannot differentiate between armed robbers and law abiding citizens."

Ukeje said there were numerous cases of this type of killings since the soldiers were deployed to Warri metropolis due to the crisis there, adding that "some soldiers enjoy intimidating, torturing, brutalising, maiming and killing of law abiding citizens of Warri all in the name of keeping the peace".



• An accident scene at Five Star Bus Stop, Oshodi-Apapa Highway yesterday aggravated the chaotic traffic situation in Lagos. It affected all feeder roads for several hours.