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## Police kill three abductors, bank MD's mother regains freedom

From Lawrence Njoku, Enugu

THREE suspected kidnappers of the wife of a local council chairman in Enugu were yesterday shot dead by the police while the 75 year-old mother of Sebastian Adigwe, Afribank's managing director (MD), who was abducted a week ago in Okpanam, Delta State, has regained freedom.

The septuagenarian mother of the banker, Mrs. Maria Adigwe, had been in captivity in the suburb of Okpanam, near Asaba, before she walked home on her own.

Delta State Police Public Relations Officer (PPRO), Charles Muka who confirmed the release, said: "She walked home today having been in the custody of her captors for seven days. The kidnappers released her in frustration as ransom was not forthcoming."

According to Muka, Mrs. Adigwe said she was taken to Okpanam.

Muka further said the police were closing in on the kidnappers, adding that "no ransom was paid and we don't pay ransom in Delta State. It is high time kidnappers had a change of heart from the unprofitable criminal act."

She was kidnapped last Tuesday from her family house at Ogbeowele Quarters in Ibusa, Oshimili North Local, Delta State, at about 8.15 p.m. while having a rest in her courtyard.

Yesterday, scores of sympathisers were in the family house to comfort and rejoice with the Adigwes.

In Enugu, Enugu State, three persons suspected to have kidnapped Jennifer, wife of the Chairman of Enugu South Local Council, Sam Ngene recently, were yesterday gunned down by the Police.

The suspects, who were identified as members of an armed robbery gang that had been terrorising residents of the state, were shot dead in an attempt to escape arrest when a team of policemen stormed their hideouts at Oji River and Ezeagu Local Councils.

Police gave the names of the dead suspects as Buchi, a native of Afikpo in Ebonyi State who was arrested at a hotel in Enugu; Eche who hails from Amansea Odo in Enugu was arrested alongside Oscar at Oji-River. Oscar hailed from Oji-River and was a 2007 graduate of Food Science Technology from Enugu State University of Science and Technology (ESUT).

Two other suspects said to have participated in the kidnap of Jennifer



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are still at large even though the police said that one of them was shot on the leg but managed to escape with bullet wound during the raid on their hideout at a cave in Amansea Odo in Ezeagu Local Council. All the suspects, including the dead, were identified as members of the Black Axe secret cult.

The Guardian gathered that the suspects were taking the police to their hideout when some of their members waylaid the police in a bid to rescue them. But in the ensuing gun duel, the three attempted to escape, but were gunned down by the police.

Items recovered from the gang by the police include a Toyota car and telephone set belonging to Jennifer, a motorbike used in their operations which was burnt during the attack, gold necklace and a wrist watch. Also recovered from their hideout was a pump action gun cut to size and some charms.

The dead kidnappers, according to a police source, had earlier made useful statements to the police, which could lead to the arrest of others, and it was in the course of the investigations that the three tried to escape.

According to the source, the three had confessed to the kidnapping of Jennifer, who was released two days after a ransom was paid. But the police continued on their trail after her release and made a breakthrough last Saturday with the assistance of a GSM service provider.

The number traced in one of the telephone lines used in negotiating the release of Jennifer happened to have been used to make calls to the girl friend of one of the dead suspects which gave a clue that exposed the gang.

The PPRO in the state, Ebere Amaraizu, confirmed the story but said details of the operation would be made available to reporters when the State Police Commissioner, Mr. Mohammed Zarewa, returns from a trip outside the state.

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