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## Bandits Kill Girl In Cold Room Robbery

*From Anietie Akpan, Calabar*

**I**T was truly a Good Friday for a retired Assistant Commissioner of Police, Mr. Joseph Effiong. Although no longer in active service, Effiong, known as a daring marksman, and better still "Effiong ata-utop" (Effiong the sharp shooter) survived bullets aimed at him by a band of fleeing armed robbers.

Tragically, however, a young girl at a cold room along Egerton Street near the Sacred Heart Cathedral, Calabar, the Cross River State capital, where the bandits struck at about 9 a.m. yesterday was unlucky as the robbers cut her down in a hail of bullets. Thereafter, they made away with an undisclosed sum of money,

In a telephone chat with The Guardian, the state Commissioner of Police, Mr. Emmanuel Ezeozue, confirmed the incident. He said his men were on the trail of the robbers.

"Yes it happened. Effiong was not killed but he was shot. The girl at the cold store died. The matter is under investigation. My men are all over the place. We are doing what we can to fish them (the robbers) out."

According to witnesses of the raid, Effiong made for the robbery scene when he heard gunshots as he dropped off his wife at the church. Effiong, who retired from the police about seven years ago, trailed the robbers in his Mercedes Benz car as they left the scene in an unmarked Kia car

Unfortunately, the hoodlums noticed that he was on their trail. They stopped abruptly and fired at Effiong's vehicle severally with their automatic rifles.

Effiong, who constituted a nightmare for many armed robbers in his heydays as a policeman, lost control of the car, which swerved into a mechanic workshop with the robbers raining bullets at him while all bystanders scampered for safety.

An automobile mechanic who saw it all, said: "I have never seen this kind of thing before in my life. You can see the rice and beans I was eating littering the floor. I had to abandon the food to take cover while the shooting lasted.

"In fact, it was like the kind of action I watch in films. The people shot at him (Effiong) rapidly in the head and shoulder and drove away. Then the man lifted his head from his steering gently, shook it slowly to the left and right and said 'ooooh' before some young men around who called him Papa rushed him to the hospital. The man is a strong man but I doubt if he will survive."

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Commotion broke out in the area as Effiong was rushed to the University of Calabar Teaching Hospital (UCTH). Later, people gathered at the scene watching the bullet-ridden Mercedes Benz in awe.

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