

CASE-FILE

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By Rotimi Williams and Sunday Michael

Operatives of the State Criminal Investigation Department (SCID), Elewe-Eran, Abeokuta, are currently probing the death of a police Inspector, Godwin Onugbor, allegedly killed in Iperu-Remo area of the state.

The Inspector, *Daily Independent* gathered, was killed on January 3, 2007 while returning from an outing.

So far, the police had arrested some persons suspected to be the killers of the late police officer. They are currently detained at SCID cell. The suspects are Samson Olowombaye, Jamiu Shoniran, Olusola Biodun, Isiaka Ayegbesi, Ajayi Laolu and Kehinde Ibrahim.

Police preliminary investigation revealed that the six suspects were at the scene of the crime on the said day.

That fateful night, *Daily Independent* gathered, some residents of Iperu-Remo were outside their houses for fresh air because of power outage. Among

them was Ajayi Laolu.

And between 11 and 12 mid night, Ajayi and others, allegedly saw a figure stealthily running into the corner of a house with unidentified object.

At that point, the boys wondered what the person could be holding, even as different thoughts assailed their minds. It was gathered that some specifically said it was a rifle, while others argued it looked like wood. As they continued to reflect on why and what such a strange person could be doing at that odd hour, one of the boys was said to have suggested they apprehend the person.

Somehow they successfully apprehended him, but could not at that moment recover the object he had with. It was gathered that their captive insisted he was not carrying object.

However, it was also alleged that a locally made rifle was discovered later in one of the rooms close to where the inspector was allegedly caught. A night guard was said to have discovered the rifle where it was kept in the room allegedly belonging to one Madam Olowombaye.

However, immediately the night guard announced the discovery, his captors descended on the hapless police officer and dealt him several

blows.

Other residents of the area, who heard the noise of both the officer and his captors also joined to beat him thinking he was an armed robber.

Some elderly men attracted to the scene by the noise and shout of "Thief! Thief!!" however, rescued captive, who at that time had been severely beaten. They were said to have instructed the boys to bring the officer to the main road, where he was asked to sit at the middle of the road pending the next line of action.

At this point, one of the suspects and son of the owner of the house where the rifle was allegedly found, Samson Olowombaye, emerged from the house and upon hearing that a rifle was found in one of their rooms went berserk.

Samson, *Daily Independent* learnt, hit the inspector on the head with a heavy stick despite spirited effort by the community leaders to dissuade him from inflicting more pain on the already weakened officer.

Samson specifically told others to mind their business since the house where the rifle was found belonged to his mother.

It was gathered that when it dawn on Samson that the inspector could die, he reportedly left the scene and some minutes later reappeared in company of one Jimoh Shoniran, whom he later identified as his cousin. It was also gathered that before he invited Jimoh someone among those at the scene told the crowd that the man was not the person the youths had thought he was, as he told them that the hapless man was a police officer, who lived some streets away.

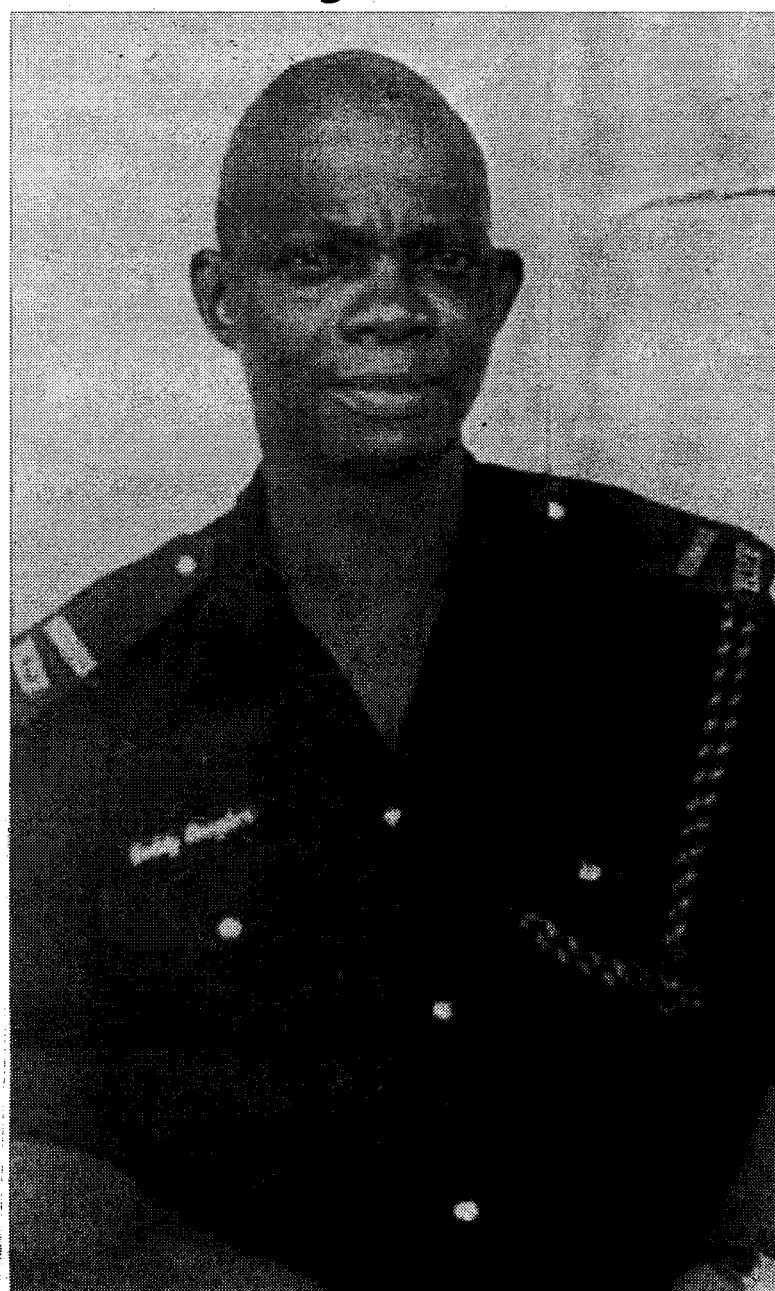
The 45-year-old Samson, *Daily Independent* learnt, was a Lagos-based contractor, who had travelled home to spend the Christmas and New Year period late last year with his aged mother in Iperu.

Investigation revealed that when Samson realised he had ran into trouble, he quickly consulted his cousin.

His intention, *Daily Independent* gathered, was to confirm from his cousin the true identity of the man. When Jimoh reportedly got to the scene, he was said to have confirmed Samson's report to others at the scene.

When the implication of their action dawned on them, they deserted the scene one after the other, with only Jimoh and Samson left with the battered officer.

The bewildered Samson, it was learnt, told Jimoh that he was in trouble and immediately sought how to move the police officer away from the area.



•The late Inspector Onugbor

Jimoh was said to have lifted the officer and asked him to go, but the latter could not go far before he slumped and died on the spot.

Meanwhile, neither Samson nor other residents went to report the matter to the police or better still thought of taking the dying officer to hospital. It was gathered that Samson and Jimoh returned to their separate homes.

By the time Samson and Jimoh were arrested, the police had recovered the battered lifeless body of the inspector where he reportedly slumped and died.

The prime suspect and his cousin reported at the police station in company of other members of their family when the police invited Jimoh. And when the police visited

Jimoh's abode, he was nowhere to be found. But he got message from one of his neighbours and some other family members who told Samson and two other family members to accompany him to the station.

Daily Independent also gathered that the deceased before his death was a police Inspector attached to Iperu Police College.

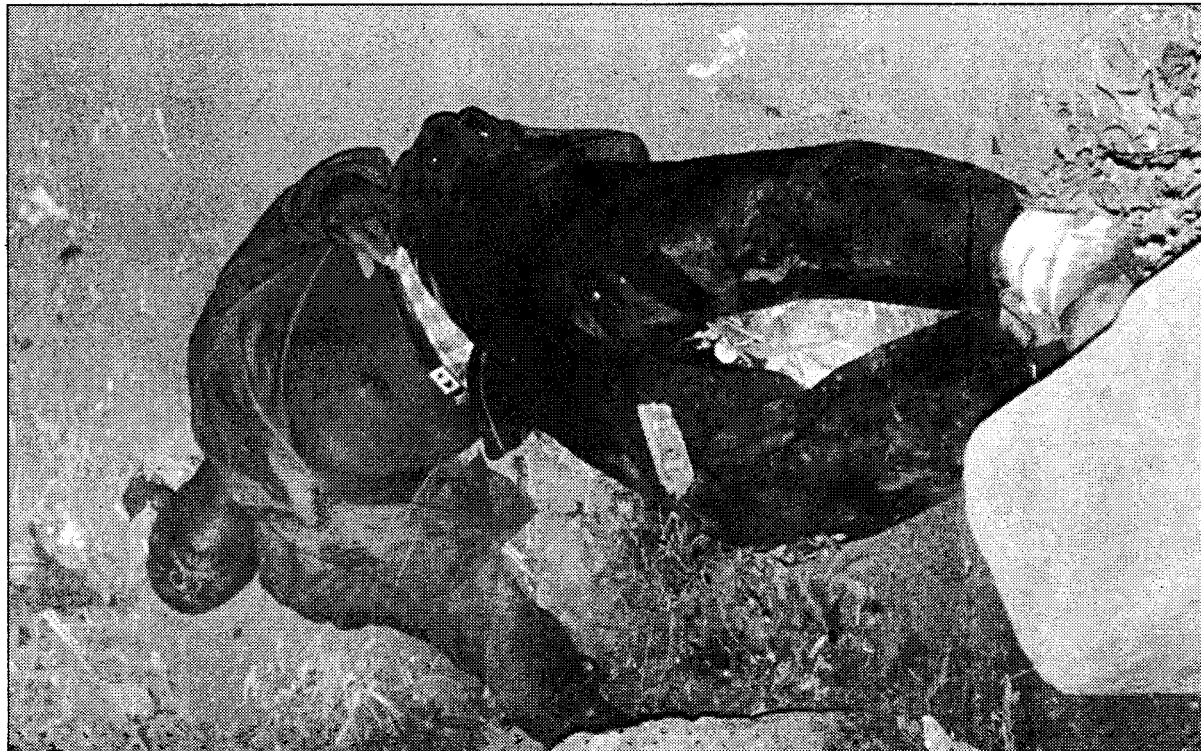
His colleague and neighbour described him as unassuming police officer, and saw everybody as a friend.

One of the suspects, Olusola Biodun, told *Daily Independent* that the deceased was an officer with a good heart. He said the late inspector helped him in his business and driving profession so many times.

Based on all the statements



•Olowombaye, Prime suspect



•Body of the Inspector.

Inspector Beaten To Death

received from those arrested, the police believed the suspects might be telling lies.

The police are currently trying to find answers to what an officer of his calibre was doing with a locally made rifle that was allegedly found on him on the day he was killed.

Another thing the police want to know is why Samson failed to report the matter or take the inspector to hospital after he had been identified by two people.

They believe that Samson and other suspects are being economical with the truth, as the rifle angle was suspected to be after thought.

Daily Independent was able to speak with the suspects at the SCID, where they are detained. They shared with us all they knew about the incident in a close encounter. Excerpts:

Samson Oyeraji Oje Olowombaye:

"I was born 45 years ago. I am from Iperu-Remo in Ogun State. I attended Wesley School, Iperu-Remo, between 1968 and 1973/1974 (primary). I attended ATC, a technical school at Yaba, Lagos State. I worked at a company called JTN in Itire, Surulere, for four years. I later started working on my own as an electrical contractor and my wife is a fashion designer. I have children. The oldest is 13 years.

"I went home on December 23, 2006, because that was the day one of my aunty's children was holding her engagement there. This incident happened on January 3, 2007. Before the incident, that night I was outside talking with my mother till 10:30 p.m. By that time my children and wife were already inside the house. The Harmattan was very harsh and I had to tell my mother to let us go inside the house. It was not up to one hour we entered into the house that we started hearing shouts of 'Thief! Thief!!' Initially, I was not bothered by the noise, but when I peeped through the window and saw they were in front of our house and some people alleging he was carrying a gun and others calling him armed robber, I wanted to come out of the house but my wife protested and prevented me from going outside. But I tried to convince her that it was our house that was involved. We argued for almost 10 minutes after which I pleaded with her to allow me see through the window.

"She obliged and from there I saw a lot of people beating a man with sticks. I heard them questioning the man, wanting to know what exactly he hid at the corner of our house. Immediately I heard this I felt I must go outside and know what exactly was happening.

"And because my mother is the only occupant of the house, I called and told her that something was happening and that somebody was said to have thrown a gun into our house. Instead of telling me to go and see what was happening, she advised me against going out. But I turned down her advice and



•L-R: Olusola Biodun, Isiaka Ayegbesi and Samson Olowombaye.

opened the door. "Immediately I came out of the house someone called to tell me that a gun had been thrown into our house. And because there was power outage that night we relied on the night guard's torchlight. When the night guard flashed his torchlight in the direction of the window we saw the gun. The guard saw the gun, too. In anger, I asked the policeman if he wanted to put me in trouble and thereafter I took a plank and hit him on the head. When I noticed that those around me at that time were not members of my family, I ran to my cousin's house to call him. I met Jamiu (cousin) that night and told him to come and witness what was happening. So, Jamiu and his elder brother came with me. By the time we got to my place the man had been moved and he sat on the main road. When we arrived there, Jamiu moved closer to him and raised his head and immediately recognised him. He asked those around if they did not know the policeman. He then turned to me and said the man was a police officer known in their area as *Ijoba*. After he said that he turned to the elders, who were around then, to ask if they did not know him. Then he lifted him up and asked him to go.

"Seeing that I was wrong, I asked Jamiu to accompany me to the police station to report the incident. And by the time we arrived the police station, the officer's lifeless body had already been taken to the station. So, when we noticed this I then told Jamiu that it was better for us to go and tell other members of our family what happened. We left the station and went directly to our elders to inform them of the situation. It was the next day we appeared at the station and were asked to write statements. That was how we became guests at the SCID."

Jamiu Shoniran:

"I'm 40 years old. I am a bricklayer. I attended primary school at Iperu-Remo. My father is dead and my mother is alive. I am married and blessed with children.

"I got to the scene of the incident about 12 midnight when Mr. Olowombaye came to call me. I met the deceased seated on the main road and because there was power outage that night I could not recognise him from afar. When I moved close to him and lifted his head I instantly recognised him. I saw some of these people there. I then lifted him up and asked him to go after I had questioned the people if they did not know him.

"I supported him to stand up before asking him to go that midnight. I did not search him. How I came to know the inspector was that I do go to a building beside his residence. I could not go there for the past two weeks because I sustained injury on my leg. He was a free man. Each time I am at the place he would come around to play as if we knew each other for ages. I liked him for this. Almost everyone around knew him very well.

"Before I asked him to go, he (Samson) told me that the man dropped a rifle in his house. But after I identified him, I told them he was an inspector of police. I then told him that dropping a gun did not warrant beating someone to the state in which I found him. I told him that since the person who threw the rifle into his house had been arrested the next thing was to report the matter to the police.

"It was at the police station that I learnt he had died. My cousin (Samson) asked me to accompany him to the station, where we heard the news of his death. He then told me he would like to contact other members of our family before going to report the matter at the station.

So, we left the station to tell other members of our family about the development. We didn't show up at the station until I was told that some police

officers came to ask for me.

"Sikiru, Alhaji, Brother Samson went to the station where we made statements. I only made statement on what I knew about the incident. And I told them exactly what I saw that midnight before we were detained and later transferred here (SCID).

Olusola Biodun:

"I am 25 years old. I had my primary education at Saint James' School, Iperu-Remo. I cannot remember exactly when I finished my primary education. I am married with two children.

"I had just arrived home from work that night of the incident. I was eating my dinner when I suddenly heard noise that some people were fighting outside. I was about warning my wife not to go out when I heard it was a thief they had apprehended. I wanted to confirm the report, so I went out to see if the report was true. When I came out of the house, I saw the man already sitting on the road and when I moved closer to him I immediately recognised him. I told them the man was an inspector of police called *Ijoba*. I was saying this when my brother (Samson) hit him on the head. I told them the man was not a thief and that I knew him very well. I also told them he was the person who gave me a letter to use in place of driving licence when I was yet to get one.

"Immediately I said my piece, I left them all there and joined my wife and children in the house. Until January 9 (2007), when I suddenly saw policemen in my shop to effect my arrest. I was asked to make statement of what I saw, which I did. But what I am yet to understand was my part in the killing. How on earth could I form alliance with killers to kill somebody who helped me? And on January 11 we were transferred to SCID."

Isiaka Ayegbesi:

"I am 31 years old. I am married with a child. I attended Anglican Primary School. I am a driver.

"I have just been given a new bus to work with. And about 7 p.m. that

day, I took the bus to the owner where I delivered the money for the day. From there I came home.

"I was in bed sleeping when I heard shouts of 'Thief! Thief!!' It was not long I came out that I heard someone threw a rifle into one of the houses in the area. They later brought the man from a corner to the main road. There were lots of people that night.

"Later, this man (pointing to Samson) came out of the house, holding nothing. I also saw Jamiu, who later told the man to go, and he left. That night I did not see the rifle until we were arrested.

"It was 4 a.m. the next day when police came to arrest us."

Kehinde Ibrahim:

"I am 50 years old. I am a spare parts dealer. I attended Ansar Ud Deen Primary School, Iperu-Remo.

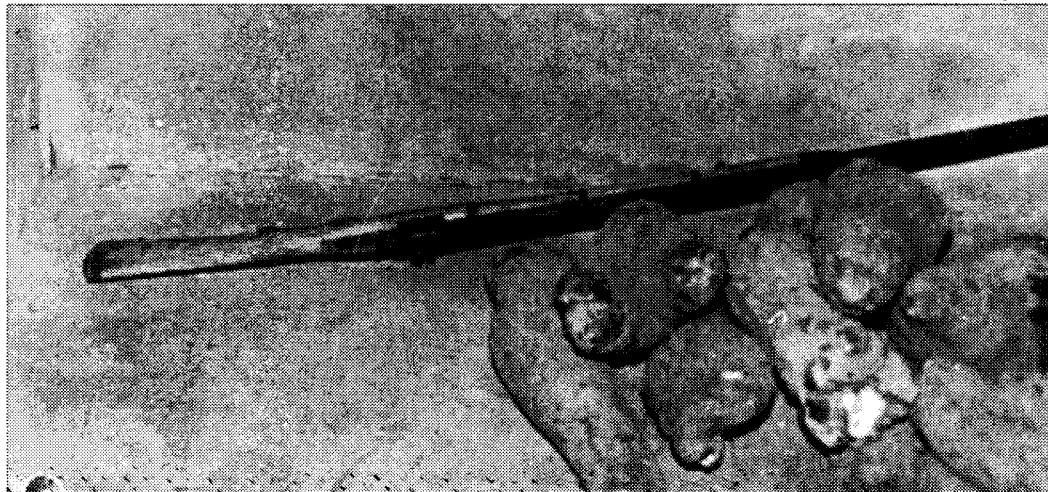
"I was not at the scene of the incident, although before I went to bed that night I had gone out to buy Ventolin, a drug for my asthma, because I am asthmatic. Before 9 O'clock that evening my family and I had gone to bed. It was about 3:55 a.m. and I was at the back of the house when one of my cousins, Sule Salami Martins, who lives directly opposite my house, was arrested. One of his tenants called Blessing told me policemen had arrested him. So, I went to meet him and I was asking him what happened that made policemen to arrest him when the police ordered me to get into their waiting patrol vehicle."

Ajayi Laolu:

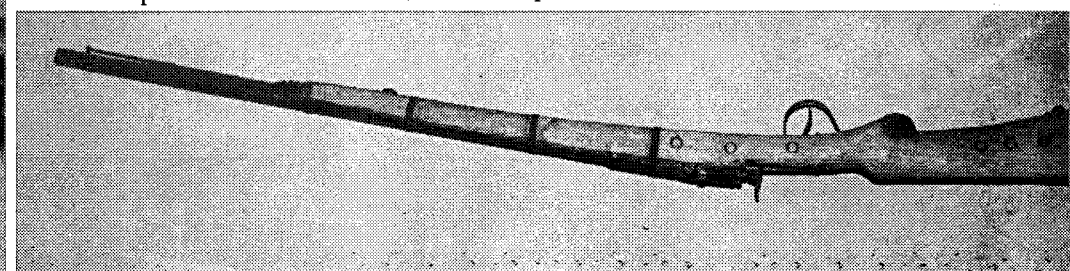
"I am 28 years old. I attended Wesley Primary School. Initially, I was working in a farm and later when MTN introduced its booster card I opened a business centre. I was living in the area the incident happened. Although I spend most of my time at Ogere, where I work, I seldom come to Iperu, but that day I was there to celebrate the festive period.

"On that day around 11p.m. we were outside talking when the man (the deceased) emerged from a corner with something in his hands. So, we saw him jump the culvert separating where I live and Samson's house. Some people were saying the man was holding something when he entered the corner, but by the time he emerged the thing had disappeared. We started contemplating what the thing could be, so we all summoned courage and apprehended him. Immediately we apprehended him, the night guard, who was in charge of the place, later came to meet us there. The night guard later found the gun where it was kept in Samson's house.

"That was when some people started shouting 'Thief! Thief!!' and other people also joined. That night there was thick darkness. But some elders attracted by the sudden noise forbade us from beating him. They asked us to bring him to the main road where he was ordered to sit down. While this was going on, Samson emerged from his house. He heard the elders saying they should not beat the man but he went ahead to hit his head with a heavy stick. He was arguing why someone would forbid him from beating the man since his action was to implicate him. After he used the stick on him, he dropped it and went straight to invite his brother, Jamiu. When Jamiu came he first moved close to the man, lifted his head up and was amazed to discover that the man was someone he knew. He then told all of us that the man was *Ijoba*, a police officer who lived some streets away."



•The rifle allegedly dropped in Samson's mother's house



•The recovered rifle