

Killed By Soldiers

The last has definitely not been heard of the death of Michael Mac-Asore, a Warri-based businessman. Asore was cut down by men of the Joint Task Force (JTF) code named 'Operation Restore Hope' ostensibly for armed robbery with his close friend and business associate, Christopher Agbaraferere arrested as an accomplice.

Major Onyema Nwachukwu, Public Relations Officer (PRO), of the JTF, on behalf of the commander, Brig-Gen. Lawrence Ngubane, gave the composition of the JTF to include officers and men of the Army, Navy, Air Force, the State Security Services (SSS) and the Police. A detachment of the force had an encounter with the victims at a road block mounted at Airport Junction on Warri-Sapele Road in Warri metropolis in the early hours of the fateful day. The result was the death of one, arrest of another and the alleged escape of the third.

Nwachukwu explained that the young man opened fire on the soldiers and they (soldiers) fired back after which the BMW car with registration No. FJ.840KJA, in which Mac-Asore was, drove off. The soldiers immediately pursued it.

However, a group identifying itself as Committee of Friends (COF) of Mac-Asore and coordinated by Festus Ukeje argued that Asore and Agbaraferere had gone to ALCON Nigeria Limited, Ughelli, also in Delta State on the fateful day as usual to transact business and on their return encountered the soldiers.

COF said they were pursued by some men in a car who initially thought

they were armed robbers but when Agbaraferere managed to look back, he saw the car behind them and the soldiers. He promptly informed his friend who stopped immediately.

Agbaraferere was said to have come down first with his hands raised in the popular fashion of "surrender" but as Mac-Asore who was on the wheels was about to alight, the soldiers allegedly opened fire on him, killing him instantly.

The disparity in the above conflicting narration between that of the JTF PRO and the COF, led to an on-the-spot assessment of the affected vehicle in the premises of the Ekpan Police Station.

Two bullet-holes could be seen directly from the driver's door, one through the front mud-guard the other through the boot-end; all on the driver's side of the car. None appeared in the rear portion to debunk the claim that the vehicle was shot at from the rear while in motion. Yet, the army spokesman maintained that had the men not shot first at the soldiers, they would not have been pursued. He even said the car was eventually involved in an accident which forced it to stop.

Here again, this claim can hardly be substantiated because the car bore no marks as would result from a collision. The only noticeable dents were those inflicted on the car while it was towed.

Mac-Asore was shot dead; Agbaraferere arrested and handed over to the police while the third, as the army PRO alleged



• Late Mac-Asore

escaped.

The escapee was said to have possessed the gun with which the soldiers at the road-block were shot at. Another claim is that bullets of 7.62mm NATO rifle were used by the victims, four of which were found in the car. Nwachukwu, however, said that the bullets were entirely different from those used by the JTF which were 7.62mm special, which the Army Major said further confirmed the third suspect now on the run with the rifle believed to have been used by them.

Though not to be controverted without

superior evidence, the possibility of shooting at a target located behind a moving vehicle without shattering the rear wind shield is only when the weapon is stretched out from a window and far from the vehicle's body work.

In that case, the bullets are most likely to drop outside the car rather than inside the vehicle from which it was fired. This, no doubt, prompted the committee of friends to circulate a strongly worded petition addressed to the Joint Military Task Force accusing the soldiers of murder and rejecting in its

entirety, the allegation that Mac-Asore and Agbaraferere were armed robbers.

They said the duo had always kept each others company and never seen with a third person as alleged.

Nwachukwu reiterated that the JTF is an organisation with a lot of integrity that would admit its fault and apologise if a mistake was made. He said the outfit was convinced that the victims were armed robbers; otherwise they would not have been shot at by the soldiers. The bottom line, the Major contended, is that the people were armed robbers.

This claim has further angered the Committee of Friends who have put forward its petition that: "On behalf of the law abiding citizens of Warri, this self imposed mandate culminating in the petition is based on illegal activities of some soldiers, whose main duty is to protect life and property but find delight in visiting the people they are supposed to protect with fire and brimstone, including death."

The COF described as brutal, the killing of Mac-Asore whom they insisted was a law adding citizen and had lived in Warri for upward of 40 years.

The two 'GSM' handsets belonging to the deceased including some amount of undisclosed cash were allegedly removed from the car "riddled" with bullets. The petitioners appear unequivocal in their belief that their friend was murdered in cold blood by 'blood thirsty soldiers.' As a further proof of this claim, they cited numerous cases of alleged involvement of

the military or the JTF in acts considered incompatible with professional military duties.

Some of these include settling of husband and wife issues, land cases where a party could secure their sympathy and then they intimidate and even brutalise the perceived enemy. Others are boy friend and girl friend cases which should ordinarily be referred to the regular police but the soldiers are accused of intimidation, torture, brute, maiming and killing law abiding citizens of Warri, all in the name of peace keeping.

These allegations were stoutly denied by the PRO, describing them as unfounded accusations full of improper motive by the COF to attract sympathy from the public.

The self-styled concerned citizens of Warri therefore, resolved to demand immediate investigation into the reasons why soldiers could so cold bloodedly shoot at unarmed and harmless law abiding citizens of the country.

The demand that the soldiers involved in the incident be prosecuted can hardly impress the authorities as Nwachukwu maintained that at instances where some gallant soldiers had been killed in the course of their duty by armed robbers and other miscreants, the army never lied about it.

Therefore, there is virtually no reason for soldiers to shoot at anyone if the first shot had not emanated from the person or group.

Confirming the professional competence of officers and men of the outfit, he said the issue of mistaken identity did not arise as it is not everybody that passed by a road block that was shot.

Seminar On Uses Of Pure Water Sachets

By Dele Moses,
REPORTER, Ilorin

Technology can turn waste into use. This is what scientific knowledge does about sachet water popularly called *pure water*.

Pure water, since its introduction in the country over a decade ago, has gained wide acceptance across the nation. Its acceptability might not be unconnected with its cheap rate, an alternative to bottled water. This is coupled with its seeming to be in purer form than raw water from the streams, as well as pipe-borne water.

However, the packaging material for the *pure water*, which is considered as a waste, has constituted a sort of pollution to our society. This is because of the indiscriminate disposal of the nylon bags by consumers of the water.

It is common to find the nylon littering the streets and in most cases, constituting great hindrance to free flow of drainages in many towns in the country.

The government is not unperturbed with this trend. The National Agency for Food, Drugs Administration and Control (NAFDAC) has considered banning its production because of the environmental hazard it constitutes.

As the government contemplates the solution to the problem, Professor Sulyman Age Abdulkareem, has come out with a scientific way of bailing the nation out of



• A sachet of pure water

the jam.

Abdulkareem, a chemical engineer and lecturer at the Industrial Chemistry Department, University of Ilorin, is one of the people who introduced *pure water* to the country. He disclosed this in his inaugural lecture delivered at the university on May 10, 2001.

"I took a membrane separation graduate course that made me fall in love with the idea of providing portable water from the most brackish of water supply. I had problem initially with packaging of purified water because most plastic bottles manufacturers/suppliers were asking for a price I considered ridiculous for empty plastic bottles. Fortunately, one day, I

observed an old man using a local fabricated electrical machine to cut *chin-chin* nylon. That marked the beginning of *pure water* business in Ilorin and most probably in Nigeria," he disclosed.

Abdulkareem in his lecture titled: "Making Stuffs, Host Stuffs: The power of Mind over Matter," said it was in the light of contemplations by the government on banning water sachets business that it dawned on him that there must be a scientific way forward.

The way forward as he devised, was making out of sachet, direct conversion products. With this technology, Abdulkareem has been able to show that the sachet, hitherto considered as waste is a blessing to humanity.

According to the chemical engineer, one of the direct conversion products he targeted from disposed water sachets is carbon black, a material used for ink, printer toner, powder and other industrial applications.

He said the carbon black initially proved difficult to be produced at reasonable yield before, is now being produced at high yield, adding that when scaled up, this new method of polymer waste management would save the nation millions of barrels of diesel and kerosene utilised at present for making carbon black product world wide.

Abdulkareem said other direct conversion products he made of the sachets were

candle, lubricating grease, shoe polish oleosorbent particle and all purpose filter particle.

He stated that the lubricating grease without surfactant could serve excellently as neutral shoe polish and the filter particle, an oil sorbing particle, being dustless could be crushed and then sieved to any desired particle size for excellent filtration application involving oils and all organic fluids at atmospheric pressure.

Speaking on the oleosorbent particle, he said: "Based on polymer phase change theory and using polymer-solvent reaction systems, the thin film *pure water* sachet material possessing oleophobic, hydrophobic, and liquid impermeable characteristics was turned into a highly porous, still hydrophobic, but highly oleophilic state.

"The transformed characteristics have been demonstrated to be ideally suited for oil-spill management. This is a multi-billion Naira idea when fully developed."

Abdulkareem expressed the hope that further researches would in future show that the sachet could foster production of petrol, diesel, kerosene and other petroleum products.

"It is hoped that with the right catalyst, and right reaction systems *pure water* sachet materials will in the nearest future be depolymerised, and subsequently oligomerised to make liquid petroleum fractions," he said.