

NEWS

Honey, I'm dying, says bank manager killed in presence of wife, children

At barely 37 years old, Mr. Elvis Meggison, Manager, Effurun Branch of UBA, had a bright future ahead of him; happily married with three lovely sons, he had his future laid out. But evil men lurked in the dark and on Christmas eve, they hatched their own plans - a dastardly death from the barrels of three guns. He was killed in the presence of his wife and kids, **SHOLA O'NEIL** reports from Warri, Delta State.

"HONEY, I am dying, I do not think I will make it. Please take care of the kids and tell them how much I love them."

Bleeding profusely from several bullet wounds, he turned to his first son - a seven-year old and said: "Promise me you will take care of your siblings. I am dying and as the eldest son, you know you are now the man of the house. Take care of everybody."

Those were the last words of Mr. Elvis Meggison, Manager, Effurun Branch of UBA Plc, shortly after he was shot by suspected assassins, who were unmoved by the pathos in his voice as they watched him die. He was 37.

Meggison, described as a "humble, easy-going and hardworking" was only about four months old in the oil city of Warri when death sneaked into his home from the back door. It came in the form of a three-man armed gang.

Family sources said the bank chief, a son of the former Iyatsere of Warri Kingdom and relative of the current holder of the second highest position in the kingdom, Chief Gabriel Mabiaku, was discussing his plans with his wife when the killers stormed his home at Ugbuwangue, near Warri.

Having identified him as the man they were looking for, the armed men shot him several times and took their time wait-

ing for him to die. They didn't have to wait for too long; the shots were devastating.

Barely 15 minutes after they brought death to the Meggison family, the assassins left the shell-shocked wife and her children to mourn the death of their dear banker. He was soaked in his own blood when the cry of agony from the family alerted neighbours to the scene.

Our correspondent gathered that the killers did not steal anything from the house, not even the expensive GSM phones of the victim and his wife that were lying around the living room. Although sources said some money was taken away from the apartment, there were wide speculations that the incident was the handiwork of hired killers.

It was gathered that a pastor of one of the biggest churches in the city had foretold the incident, months before it occurred. A source close to the family told our correspondent that the seer told Meggison that there was temptation that could cost him his life.

"He was put on a special programme in the church and advised to fast and pray for several days to avert the disaster. The pastor told him that he would be killed and that he should engage in the fast after which he must sow a faith seed for himself and the family," the source added.

Weeks after the revelation, he

reportedly escaped death by the whiskers in a motor accident in which others were injured.

If he thought that was the temptation foreseen by the pastor, Meggison was wrong; heartless killers laid in wait and their moment came on the 24th December, hours before Christmas.

Police Commissioner, Delta Command, Mr. Udom Ekpoudom, who confirmed the report in a telephone interview with our correspondent during the week, described the incident as "very unfortunate," promising to unravel the identity of the killers.

Already, Ekpoudom disclosed that a team from the Criminal Investigation Department of the state police headquarters, Asaba, had been assigned to the case and were looking at several leads to help them get to the root of the matter.

However, impatient family members expressed dissatisfaction with the pace of investigation into the incident. A source close to Chief Mabiaku told our correspondent that they were unimpressed with how the police were handling the case.

"This man is a prominent Nigerian, a banker, not just a banker, but a branch manager and we are not seeing the kind of reaction we expected from the police. Apart from his position in the bank, the man is a prominent Itsekiri indigene, a son of the immediate past Iyatsere of Warri Kingdom. You know what that means? It means that his father was the second in-command to the monarch, His Royal Majesty."

The victim was killed barely four months after he was transferred from Benin to head the UBA, Effurun Branch.

Meggison's friends believe that the key to unlocking the mystery of his murder rests in his place of work.

"We have heard rumours that he was threatened by some workers who were recently sacked from their position in the bank. Although the decision involving

their sack was taken at the bank's corporate headquarters, some of them were said to have accused Elvis (Meggison) of influencing their sack, promising to deal with him," a source, who pleaded for anonymity added.

Confirming the report, Ekpoudom told our correspondent in a telephone interview that he was aware of that situation. Although the police boss would not comment on the authenticity or otherwise of the allegation, he promised to get to the root of the matter.

He said: "As I told you, CID is handling the case and we are determined to get to the root of the whole thing. It could be that they (sacked staff) know something about it. We will not leave any stone unturned."

As convincing as Ekpoudom sounded in the interview with our correspondent, Meggison's friends and family members expressed little hope that the police would find his killers because of the long chain of unresolved murders in, not only Warri, but the entire Delta State. Our correspondent recalled that

the incident continued a trend of sensational killing of prominent Itsekiri men by suspected assassins, particularly on the even of popular celebration days.

Famous among the killings was Chief Sunny Deghele, youth leader, government official and Chairman of Orere Community Development Community, who was gunned down by assassins on the 24th of December, 2005. Even though he had over N.5million in the boot of his new Mercedes Benz E Class, nothing, including the money, was stolen.

Exactly a week later, another Itsekiri youth leader, Mr. Sunny Yonyonyon, was killed, in the presence of his wife on December 31. They were on their way from church service when the gunmen struck.

The conundrums of these deaths have remained unresolved, leading to fear that the killer of Meggison may never be found.

Yet his family are hoping that they may soon find out why their husband and father was taken away from them so brutally.



• The late Meggison