

Gunmen abduct Speaker's mother

■ Oil firm's accountant killed ■ US professor shot

A MASSIVE manhunt was launched yesterday for the kidnappers of Bayelsa State Speaker's mother.

Mrs. Hansan Seibarugu was snatched on Tuesday night at her Akaibiri community in Ekpetiama clan of Yenagoa Local Government Area by yet unknown gunmen. The police have arrested one suspect.

Mrs. Seibarugu (alias Mama Yenagoa) is the first kidnap victim in the state since the one-and-a-half-year governorship of Dr. Goodluck Jonathan and the

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early days of the Chief Timipre Sylva-led administration.

Mrs. Seibarugu, who is in her 60s, was kidnapped by the unknown gunmen, numbering five, who came in a speed boat at about 8p.m. On arrival at her daughter's shop beside a river bank in the community where she was, the unknown gunmen seized her and shot sporadically into the air before speeding off to an unknown destination.

Commissioner of Police

Mr. Julian Okpaleke said one suspect was undergoing interrogation on the issue.

The speaker is in South Africa for a parliamentary conference. His press secretary, Mr. Jonah Okah, said the government was making efforts to unmask those behind the "unfortunate" kidnap. He pleaded for Mrs. Seibarugu's early release.

Also condemning the incident in a statement through his press secretary, Mr. Ebimo Amungo, Governor Timipre Sylva described it as "barbaric".

The statement said Sylva, who spoke with Seibarugu a few minutes after the news of the kidnap was broken, promised that the government would do everything to support the security services to find the speaker's mother.

"My Honourable Speaker, I want you to be strong in this time of trial. We share your pain and I can assure you that I will use all the resources available to me to help find your mother and bring these criminals to justice," the statement quoted Sylva as

saying. He said the government had initiated a proactive strategy to rid the state of hostage-takers, adding that in a few months, the results would be obvious.

The Governor expressed regrets that the actions of a few criminal elements were damaging the economy of the state as well as the sense of security of its people and business community.

He vowed to purge the state of criminals.

"My administration shall

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run a zero tolerance policy against kidnappers in Bayelsa State," the Governor said.

In two armed robbery attacks in Port Harcourt, capital of Rivers State, a Nigerian accountant was killed and an American professor injured.

Elder Echendu was killed in front of his Ede Street Ogbunabali, Port Harcourt home at about 11pm on Tuesday.

Echendu, an accountant with Noble Oil Services, Port Harcourt was said to be returning to his house in his Toyota Camry car which he bought about two weeks ago, when the armed men shot him at the gate. The car was taken away.

Ede's wife rushed him to the hospital where he was pronounced dead.

The Nation gathered that before attacking Echendu, the robbers had robbed a woman who also was on Ede Street. The robbers wanted to take away the woman's Mercedes 190 "Tokunbu" car. But the woman told them that the car was not in good working condition. In place of the car, they went for the woman's trinkets and N15,000 cash.

In the other incident, an American, Prof. Micheal Watts, was attacked by about eight armed robbers at the office of the National Point newspaper, Orominike Street, D-Line, Port Harcourt.

Eyewitnesses said that the incident occurred at about 11.30am when Watts was on

an official visit to the newspaper house.

Before going to the newspaper, Watts was said to have gone to a bank on Olu Obasanjo Road, in the city to withdraw some money. From there, the armed robbers trailed him. The money Watts went for was not ready and so he left for the media house.

To enable them enter the newspaper's office, the armed robbers shot the gateman in the leg.

They accosted Watts and demanded for the money he went to withdraw. The man gave them \$6,000, saying he had not cashed his cheque. Angered at this, they fired him in his right arm.

They ransacked the office, carting away two laptop computers, handsets of some staff and other valuables.

The Police said investigations had begun into the incidents.

"I'm feeling a little rattled, like everyone in the office," Watts said. "Thank God no one was seriously injured ... It could have been much worse."

National Point reporter Ibiba Donpedro, who witnessed the shooting, said at least six gunmen on motorbikes arrived shortly before noon.

"The next thing, we heard shots all over. Young men came in, shot the (professor) in the hand, ransacked the offices, shut up the windows, shot the security guy on the leg, and left," she said. "They were saying, 'Where's the white man? Where's the money from the bank?'"