

CITYBEATS

Police smash kidnap gang

• 'How we abducted banker, others'

ANOTHER member of a seven-man gang that allegedly kidnapped an official of a new-generation bank, has been arrested.

Anthony Agidi (33) was caught by operatives of the Lagos State Special Anti-Robbery Squad (SARS) on October 26 in the home of a community leader in Benin City, the Edo State capital.

Five members of the gang were said to have been earlier arrested.

But Agidi has told the police that two, including the gang's leader and his second in command, were killed in gun battles with the police.

Another member, Kenneth, is said to be at large.

Police Commissioner Kayode Aderanti directed SARS to fish out Agidi following the arrest of his accomplices.

Two locally-made pistols and some cartridges were recovered from the house where Agidi was arrested.

Agidi, who hails from Delta State, told his interrogators that he lives at Awoyaya in Ibeju Lekki, Lagos, with his family.

"Let me tell you the truth; the gang's leader died in exchange of fire with SARS operatives. Even his second-in-command also died in another encounter with the police. They are Steph and Akpofure. The other two members are Tony and Ogenyerewo, who were earlier arrested and charged to court. Apart from those who died, others are in prison. I ran away when they were exchanging fire with police.

"If I were the gang's leader, would I have run away cowardly like that? In war or exchange of fire, anybody can

By Ebele Boniface

die, including the police. I ran away because I could not withstand the fire power of the police," he said.

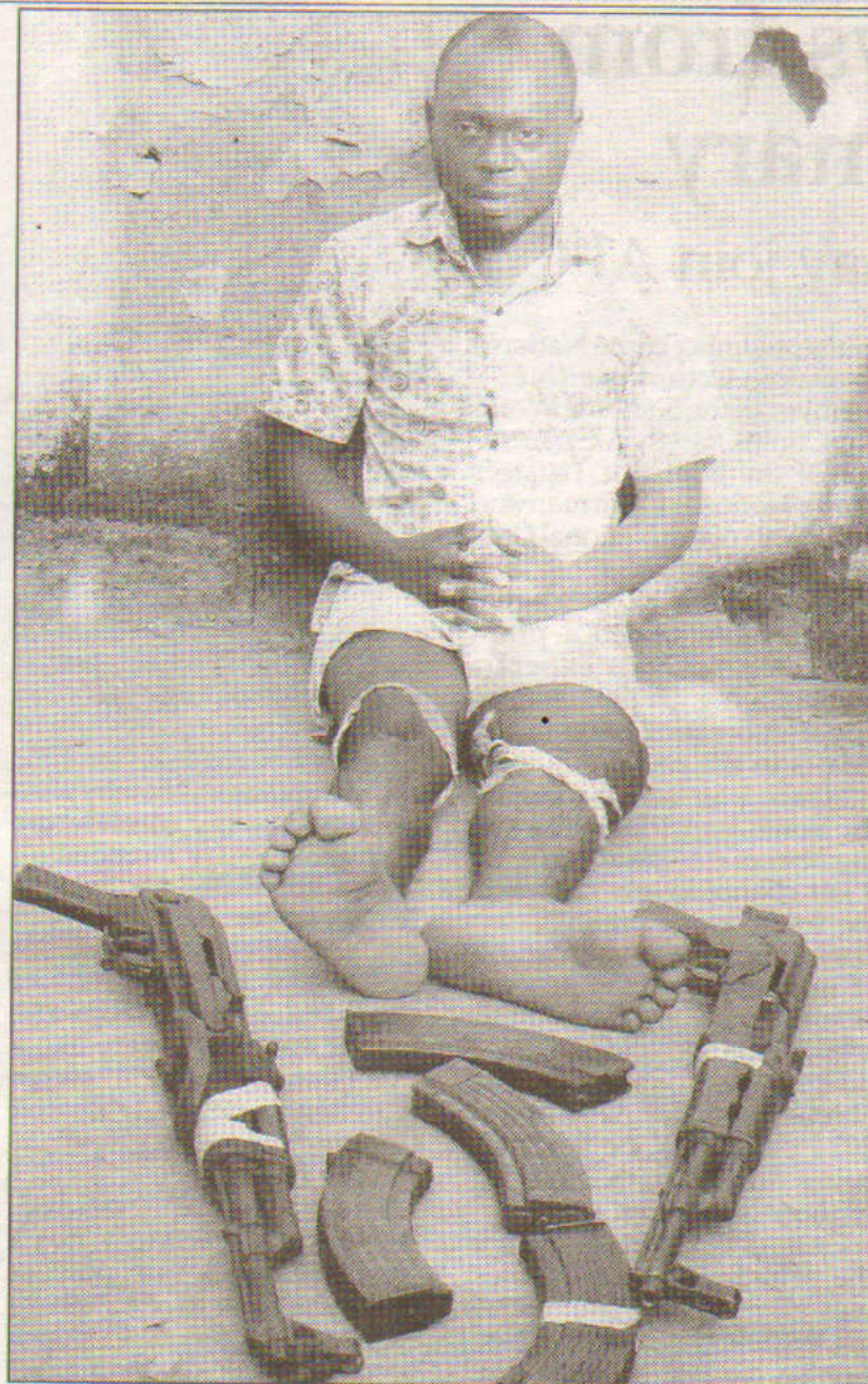
Agidi, who claimed to be a welder in Port Harcourt, the Rivers State capital, said he relocated to Lagos in 2011, adding: "I had never engaged in robbery before; rather, I am a kidnapper and I have participated in six kidnap operations and it was one of my friends called Henry, who lured me into kidnap work. He is also a welder."

He said his gang abducted a woman who was driving into her compound in 2011.

"We stopped her and kidnapped her. I did not know how much she paid as ransom because as a young member, they did not disclose it to me; they only gave me N280,000 as my own share. The second operation was at the Benin By-pass. We kidnapped a man and I got N100,000. The third operation in Warri, Delta State, involved the kidnap of a woman. I was given N2.8million. Also in Benin, we kidnapped a woman and collected N9million ransom. I was given N1.5million."

The suspect said from his fifth operation in Delta State, he got N3.5million; from the sixth in Lagos, he got N300,000 out of the N1.25 million ransom.

He added: "Our seventh operation involved a woman banker. We were seven, including two members of another gang. Steph blocked her with his vehicle and Tony alighted with Afure. We took her away, leaving her vehicle. We took her inside a bush



• Agidi with the arms recovered from the gang

and built a tent with mosquito net for her. I drove our operational vehicle. She stayed about seven days in the camp, but she ate choice foods, including roast chicken.

"She was about paying us N6 million when unfortunately, Akpofure was arrested when he went to collect the ransom. He took police to the camp and they rescued the woman. Nobody raped her. The AK 47 rifles are owned by Tony, Akpofure and Nyero, while Kenneth, Steph and Omor are the owners of the pump-action rifle and one cut-to-size pistol."

Saying he has made it big in crime, Agidi stated: "I

have four plots of land in Benin and one in Lagos. I was about to develop them when I was arrested. I have one Sienna car; I also opened a shop for my wife at Ibeju Lekki."

The source said Agidi's gang exchanged fire with SARS operatives at Egbe fun in Ajah area, a few weeks ago, adding that a member of his gang died in the crossfire; Agidi escaped.

The gang, it was gathered, had been a terror in the Southwest where it made over N70 million before meeting its Waterloo.

The gang also robbed victims of their money and valuables in Lagos, Edo, Delta and Ogun states.

Red Cross seeks more govt support