

Militia leader 'General Iron' **killed,** dismembered in Cross River

By Nsa Gill, Calabar

A notorious militia and gang leader, Thomas Obi Tawo, fondly called "General Iron" in Boki Local Government Area, Cross River State where he previously held sway, was on Thursday killed in a gun battle with local vigilante in the area.

He was killed along with some of his gang members and his lifeless body was brought out to the village square where it was dismembered in the presence of some victims of his reign of terror.

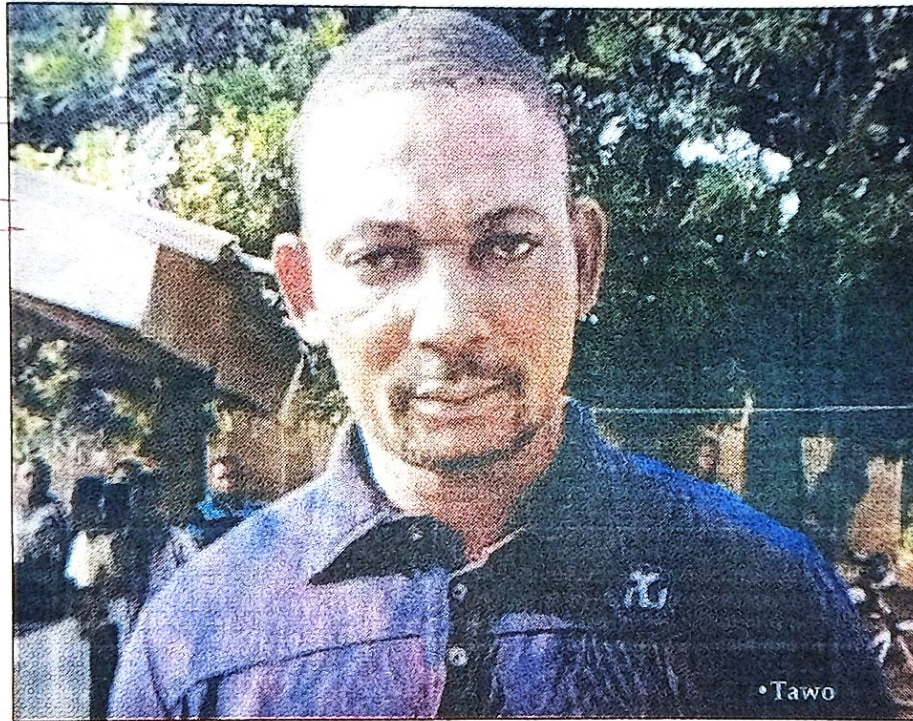
The late gang leader was formerly a special assistant to Governor Ben Ayade on Forest Security but was relieved of his appointment after he was accused of continually overstepping his bounds and repeatedly terrorising those he believed were opposed to his interests.

Social media handles of individuals and groups in Cross River State were awash with pictures of his dismembered body and various write-ups that chronicled different experiences of people who knew about his activities.

Mr. Attach Ochinke, a former Attorney-General of the state and indigene of Boki Local Government Area, wrote on his Facebook page: "Thomas Obi Tawo, popularly called General Iron, was an illiterate, an unexposed young man with the tendencies of a small time criminal.

"He is dead; hunted down and killed disgracefully like a rat. A lot of people, including me, believe he deserved his end. But I think Gen Iron was deceived unto his death."

He claimed that "the political system used and dumped him, and dodged from



him when the chips were down".

Ochinke said at the time of General Iron's death, "the political system he thought he was serving had abandoned him; too ashamed to associate with him.

"Even the government that gave him a high office in recognition of his atrocities sacked him and withdrew the high office.

"He stood alone, naked in his last days. He had no place to hide; none of the political associates accommodated him. He ran into the bush like a rat.

"I am sure the people he thought he

was working with and working for avoided his phone calls in his troubled last days".

Another indigene of the area also wrote that the late gang leader "became a small god overnight in Boki community. He converted the community oil palm estate to his private entity.

"He never wanted any opposition or any rival around his neighbourhood. He became a commander of a militia. He threatened to kill the majority of the people in his area.

"His boys were brandishing AK47 at

will without any provocation. He threatened the peace of the entire Boki LGA. He banished some residents of his community from their ancestral homes, etc."

According to Ochinke, Iron's last act of misdemeanour was his brazen attack on another former aid to Governor Ayade, Mr. Mark Obi, who did not follow Governor Ayade to defect from the People's Democratic Party to the All Progressive Congress.

In sheer display of audacity, Iron went to Mark Obi's house and warned him to desist from holding any PDP activities in his ward. Mark Obi stood his ground on that occasion and Iron left.

"Mark Obi dutifully reported the matter to the Commissioner of Police in a detailed petition but nothing happened allegedly, and General Iron was misled by that as an endorsement of his actions, and by the seeming lack of admonition from the government he served, egged on by political associates and fellow political leaders in Boki, he attempted to make good his promise of killing Mark Obi for planning to hold PDP activities in Oku ward.

"Mark Obi miraculously survived the attack with grievous injuries. This was the height of it. Iron had outdone himself."

Governor Ayade sacked him and security was fortified in the community. He fled into the bush and wrote an apology letter to the governor.

Few days after the security team that hunted him withdrew from the community, local vigilante took over and his attempt to resurface led to a clash and a gun battle as well as his subsequent dead.