

Gunshots, violence welcome Shaibu to Benin after reinstatement by court

APC, PDP chieftains trade blames

Suyi Ayodele | Benin

A new theatre of violence on Thursday welcomed the reinstated deputy governor of Edo State, Philip Shaibu, to Benin City as some armed men, suspected to be vigilante members, opened fire on the motorcade of the embattled deputy governor on his way out of the Benin Airport.

Shaibu, who landed at the Benin Airport in a chartered aircraft in company of the candidate of the All Progressives Congress (APC) in the September 21 governorship election in the state, Senator Monday Okpebholo, was received by his supporters.

Trouble started immediately when the motorcade hit the ever-busy Airport Road, as the armed men, suspected to be vigilantes, in a Sienna vehicle parked across the road, opened fire, while Shaibu's supporters, among whom were

some armed men too, responded with gunshots.

The exchange of gunshots, which occurred at about 2:00 p.m., left commuters on the road scrambling to safety. It took the intervention of regular security agents to restore normalcy, as the armed security agents shot sporadically to disperse the warring parties.

Shaibu, it will be recalled, was reinstated on Wednesday by a Federal High Court, Abuja, headed by Justice J. K. Omotosho, who voided his earlier impeachment by the Edo State House of Assembly on April 8.

Shortly after the court judgment, Shaibu's supporters boasted that the embattled deputy governor would resume in his office on Thursday, just as the state government issued a statement, reiterating that the deputy governor, Godwins Omobayo, remained the valid deputy governor as the assembly was said to have appealed the judg-

ment and filed a stay of execution.

Shortly after the shootings, Shaibu drove in the company of Okpebholo to the APC State Secretariat, where they went into a closed-door meeting.

Reacting to the development, the legislative aide to Senator Okpebholo on Media and Communication, Godswill Inegbe, in a statement, accused a leader of the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP), Chief Francis Inegbeniki, of being the mastermind of the fracas.

Inegbe, in the statement alleged that "During the unprovoked attack, three mobile policemen attached to the security detail of Senator Okpebholo were injured with bullet wounds, while one of the policemen has been declared dead!

"Senator Okpebholo is at this moment admitted in an undisclosed hospital in Benin receiving medical attention, and other members of his entourage who were victims of the attack are in

various hospitals in Benin," Inegbe affirmed.

Denying the allegation of his involvement in the fracas, Chief Inegbeniki said that he was nowhere near the Airport not to talk of sponsoring or leading anyone to attack the motorcade of the APC candidate.

Describing the allegation as a plot to tarnish his image, the PDP leader said: "It is not true that I led or sponsored thugs on protest along Airport road in Benin. As I speak, I was never on Airport Road as at the time the said confrontation took place."

"It is wrong for anyone for any reason to accuse me of leading or sponsoring any protest. I urge the government, security agencies and the general public to disregard the falsehood. The election is around the corner, and I quite understand that my enemies would do anything desperately to blackmail me or tarnish my reputation", he said, adding that as a peaceful and law-abiding Nigerian, and at his

age, being an elder statesman, he would never contemplate such act.

Meanwhile, the deputy governor's office located at

Osadebey's Avenue in the Government Reservation Area has been taken over by members of the Edo State Security Network (ESSN)

Financial autonomy: OYACA promises sanction against corrupt LG chairmen

By Nurudeen Alimi

THE Oyo State Anti-Corruption Agency (OYACA), has promised to investigate and see to the prosecution of any local government chairman accused of corrupt practices in the state.

Chairman of OYACA, Justice Eni Esan (ret'd) stated this while answering questions from journalists on the roles of the agency in curbing corruptive tendencies associated to the local government system and the general insinuations about possible mismanagement of funds by the council chairmen.

Recall that the Supreme Court recently gave judgment that called for direct payment of local government allocation to their respective accounts.

Esan, who spoke at a sensitisation programme on the roles of stakeholders in the fight against corruption, organised by the agency for directors of Ministries, Directorate and Agencies (MDAs) of Oyo State government in Ibadan on Thursday, stated that the OYACA is poised to look into any petition against any local government chairman forwarded to the agency investigate to bring the culprit to book.

"OYACA will look into any petition and bring whoever is guilty to book, whether the person is a local government chairman or a member of the

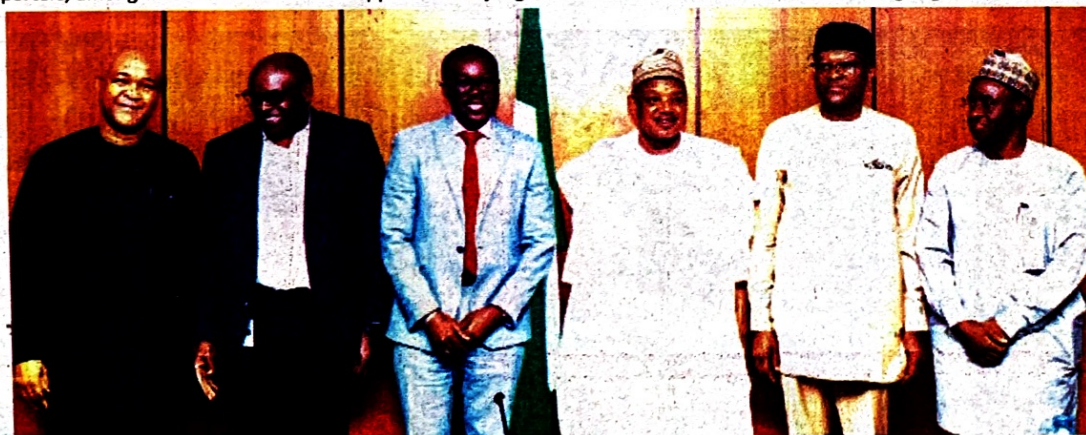
council administrators, whatever position the person is holding, OYACA is no respecter of persons

"We have investigated the highs and the mighty, so it doesn't make any difference to us, once there is an allegation of corruption, we are backed by law to bring the perpetrators to book, either by taking them to court to indict them or we advise the Civil Service to invoke its rules to punish the perpetrators if they are civil servants."

She added that the agency has spent much efforts on preventive measures to nip corruption in the bud with the use of orientation, sensitisation and advocacy approaches to bring every sector of the society into terms with the effects of corrupt acts in the state.

The retired justice maintained that the approach has helped to prevent corrupt practices, as people's mindsets has changed for better, knowing the consequences of the act from the advocacy programmes.

"Sensitisation is a huge part of nipping corruption in the bud, like what you just witnessed at this event where directors of MDAs were sensitised about what corruption is, its effects on the state's economy and the society, the punishment that awaits perpetrators as well as roles they can play to prevent corruption.



From left: Task Team Leader, Hope Governance, Mr Ikechukwu Nwege; Consultant, World Bank, Prof Foluso Okunmadewa; the new Country Director, World Bank, Mr Ndiame Diop; Minister of Budget and Economic Planning, Senator Abubakar Bagudu; the Permanent Secretary, Mr Nebolisa Anako; and Director-General, Budget Office, Mr Tanimu Yakubu, during the visit of the World Bank Country Director to the minister in Abuja on Wednesday.