

Williams: Police quiz NMA DG, four others

... over missing N550m, crime scene worries British police
• Plus inside story on the post-mortem



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THE Director General of the National Maritime Authority, Mr. Festus Ugwu, three directors of his board and the Legal Adviser of the

authority, Mr. Matthew Egbadon, were on Sunday quizzed by a combined team of British and Nige-

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rian detectives in connection with the death of a Peoples Democratic Party chieftain, Chief Funsho Williams.

The quizzing of Ugwu and his team came a few hours after the British detectives told the Inspector General of Police, Mr. Sunday Ehindero, that they were bothered that the conditions they met at the scene of the crime could make it difficult to achieve any breakthrough in investigations.

Ugwu and other members of the NMA board were interrogated at the Force Criminal Investigations Department Annex, Alagbon, Lagos.

The directors of the NMA are Ade Olopoenia; Adejare Sobayo; Awwal Markafi; Eze

A; and C.C. Ezeala.

As at press time, it was not clear which of the five were invited by the police.

Williams was the chairman of the NMA board before he was killed on Thursday.

Sources said that Ugwu and his team arrived at the FCID at about noon for the interrogation by both the Metropolitan Police and the police team led by the Deputy Inspector General of Police, B. Mr. Ogbonnaya Onovo.

The NMA team came in cars with registration numbers FG 02021, FG 332Q41, FG 297Q41, and FG 396Q41.

It was learnt that four days before he was killed, Williams gave Ugwu a query over the

finances of the NMA.

He gave Ugwu four days to respond to the query, which bothered on an alleged missing N550million from the coffers of the NMA.

Ugwu reportedly gave Williams an oral explanation, which the late politician said was unsatisfactory.

According to sources, Williams had given a hint that he was going to report the matter to the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission.

The late politician, popularly called Captain by his associates and followers, was said to have prepared the letter to the EFCC but was yet to dispatch it before he was killed.

It was not clear whether the letter was removed by the assailants.

When Williams muted the idea of examining the books, some of the directors reportedly pleaded with him not to go ahead with the probe.

They allegedly urged him to limit his investigations in-house.

As at press time on Sunday, Ugwu and his team were still at Alagbon.

The new line of investigation could indicate that the police are looking beyond political circles for the killers.

A string of violent clashes among rivals of the PDP in the state shortly before Williams was murdered had raised strong suspicions that his death was politically motivated.

Efforts to reach both Onovo and Ugwu on the issue were unsuccessful.

Both of them did not pick calls made to their mobile phones.

But the acting head, Corporate Affairs Department of the NMA, Mr. Gbenga Ogunsakin, denied that his bosses were quizzed.

Ogunsakin equally denied knowledge of any missing money from the coffers of the authority or any query to Ugwu by Williams.

But there were fears on Sunday that tracking down Williams's killers could turn into a failed task as the British detectives brought in to conduct the investigation said they were not satisfied with the condition they met at the crime scene.

The British detectives told the Inspector General of Police, Mr. Sunday Ehindero, at a late night meeting on Saturday, that they were not sure they could make a breakthrough with the case since the crime scene had been swamped by visitors before their arrival.

Apart from Ehindero and the three British detectives, Onovo and some senior members of his investigation team also attended the meeting.

The British detectives included a forensic expert, Willy R. Reilly, and a crime scene manager, Michael Murphy.

It would be recalled that the Lagos State Governor, Asiwaju Bola Tinubu, had on Friday warned that vital evidence might be compromised if the crime scene was not properly preserved.

In spite of the reservations by the British team and fears that it could leave sooner than expected, Ehindero, who reportedly visited the British High Commission in Abuja before coming to Lagos on Friday, urged the detectives to put in their best.

Efforts by *THE PUNCH* to run a check on the background of the British detectives on Sunday met a brick wall.

The search engines yielded no result, while an enquiry to the media section of the Scotland Yard and the office of Sir Ian Blair had not been replied at 9.37pm on Sunday.

Meanwhile, autopsy was on Sunday carried out on Williams by three pathologists at the Creek Hospital, Ikoyi, Lagos.

The pathologists were from the police, army and Lagos State.

A source close to Creek Hospital told our correspondents on Sunday, "Though I cannot give you details of the autopsy but I can authoritatively tell you that the post mortem examination was performed on the deceased around 9am.

"Three pathologists conducted the autopsy at the hospital.

"Besides, the autopsy lasted for two hours while the cause of death was that Williams was strangled to death."

Condolence visits

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counterpart, Alhaji Ahmed Muazu; PDP's Deputy National Chairman, South, Chief Olabode George; Deputy Speaker, House of Representatives, Mr. Austin Opara; and Minister of Transport, Dr. Abiye Sekibo.

Others included former Head of State, Chief Ernest Shonekan; the former Military Administrator of Lagos State, Admiral Ndubuisi Kanu (rtd); former Executive Director, National Human Rights Commission, Alhaji Bukhari Bello; and the Chairman, Daar Communications Limited, Chief Raymond Dokpesi.

Masari said, "We know that we believe in God and we know that when our time is up, we will go.

"But the way and manner it happened is of great concern to us in Nigeria.

"We have to be more patient and tolerant.

"We need good men in politics.

"All necessary actions will be taken to ensure that those who did this are brought to book so that it gives hope to those who are interested in public life to come out."

He had while signing the condolence register, prayed God to grant Williams eternal rest.

George and Odili called for patience and calm, insisting that the killing of Williams will not go the way other high profile cases of murder in the

country had gone.

But Soyinka, who once referred to the PDP as a nest of killers, refrained from commenting on the killing of the aspirant.

He only wrote in the register, "We'll stand together on this."

Speaking with journalists, George called on Nigerians to be patient over the investigation of the murder, arguing that now was not the time to go into the argument of past unresolved murders.

George said, "The Government has issued a statement and the police have issued a statement on how prepared they are to solve this.

"All we can do now is to allow the police to do its work.

"They have brought in experts from abroad.

"The only thing we can do for the memory of this gentleman is to act on that which he lived - peace."

Odili said, "It is a dastardly act by evil men; men who neither know nor fear God.

"We pray that the Almighty God will use this as a turning point in this country.

"Our party is in pain, our leaders are in pain. Let us remain calm and be patient. God is the consoler of all of us."

While Shonekan said it was a murder too many.

Muazu expressed concern over the inability of the police to unravel past murders.