

Assassins swoop on politicians

OLAMILEKAN LARTEY

SUSPECTED assassins struck at five different locations on Saturday morning in Ekiti State, leaving in their trail a dead mobile policeman and several injured leaders.

Among those seriously wounded were the chairman of the state chapter of the Peoples Democratic Party, Chief Ropo Adesanya and a governorship aspirant in the state, Chief Dapo Alibalo. The attackers reportedly drove to different locations on the eve of the senatorial primary of the PDP.

As at press time, Adesanya was lying critically ill at the Government House Clinic in Ado Ekiti, the state capital.

Among those who were attacked, apart from Adesanya, were a member of the House of Representatives, Chief Samuel Adeyemi a.k.a Orilele from Ekiti Central Federal Constituency 1, a governorship aspirant from Ire Ekiti, Chief Dapo Alibalo, and another aspirant, Prof. Segun Ojo.

According to victims and survivors who spoke to our correspondent in Ado Ekiti,

Ire Ekiti and Itapa, the armed men operating in a black four-wheel drive vehicle, attacked the party chieftains and aspirants, one after the other at different locations.

The bandits, alleged to have spoken in both Yoruba and English, were armed with AK47 rifles and other arms.

Adesanya who spoke at the heavily secured Government House Clinic, where he was receiving intensive care, told our correspondent that the assassins attacked him and other party members at a popular hotel (name withheld) in the state capital around 11pm on Friday.

"They battered my head with bottles and repeatedly asked for Orilele," he said.

Adesanya said he thought the men were riot policemen because they wore police uniform and MOPOL vests.

"They said, they would kill me the way they killed Daramola," he added.

He, however, managed to escape by scaling the wall of the hotel before hiding in the premises of a nearby church until a rescue team arrived.

Although he was in intensive care and could barely

talk, Adesanya directed the party executive to ensure that the senatorial primary scheduled for Saturday proceeded without delay despite the incident and his condition.

The Sole Administrator of the state, Brig-Gen Tunji Olurin stood by while Adesanya's head was being stitched at the Government House Clinic.

Also, the state director of the State Security Service, Mr Joseph Gabadi, was among the early callers at the hospital.

At Ire Ekiti, the elderly Alibalo described how the gunmen fired two shots into his bed before eventually cornering him in an adjoining room.

He said they showed him a copy of one of his campaign handbills and said they wanted to kill him because he wanted to be the governor of Ekiti State.

Showing the correspondent two expended shells that were recovered from his bedroom, Alibalo said it was God and the neighbours who summoned courage to come out that saved his life.

Alibalo said, the incident would not make him withdraw from the race. He stressed that he had no

doubt the attack was politically motivated.

Adeyemi, who hid in the bush for over three hours after the gunmen opened fire on them at the hotel, alleged that the suspended governor of the state, Mr Ayodele Fayose was the brain behind the attack.

He mentioned several PDP chieftains (names withheld) as the main suspects in the attack.

He appealed to President Olusegun Obasanjo, to stop the violence in Ekiti by placing Fayose under arrest.

"Mr. President should do something, if not this state will not know peace. Fayose is still on the prowl holding meetings everywhere including Ado Ekiti," he said.

Another aspirant that survived Saturday attack, the second in two weeks, Prof Ojo, said if not for the human shield that his Itapa community provided for his home as well as the vigilance of local hunters whom he had employed since the last attack, the three-hour siege on his home would have led to his death.

"My life is in the hands of the president, the Inspector General of Police and the Ekiti State Commissioner of Po-

lice. I didn't know it would be like this. Two attacks in two weeks, is too much. I'm not making any assertions but it is apparent the attacks are political," he said.

Two persons were killed in the last PDP primaries in this state.

"Anybody that needs to be picked up should be picked up," he added.

As tension again built up in the state on Saturday, investigation and accounts of witnesses showed that the gunmen operated in a coordinated attack in a black vehicle with Lagos registration number CM404MUS.

Facts from the account of six aides of senatorial aspirant, Mrs Abiola Ayinmonche, who had earlier been kidnapped and locked up in the boot of the same vehicle and driven all over the operation points, indicated that the same gang was at work with a given objective.

Ayinmonche, who is the Chairman of the Nigeria Universities Commission, sought to represent Ekiti North in the Senate on Saturday.

The aides had been held hostage with the aim of using them to locate and trace Ayinmonche.

They were, however, set free when the two members of the gang, including the driver sustained gunshot injuries as local hunters guarding Ojo's residence repelled their attack in Itapa Ekiti.

The Commissioner in charge of the Ekiti Police Command, Mrs Tinuke Koyi, could not confirm the number of officers that fell during the incidents.

Koyi had to hurriedly return from an official trip to Abuja on Saturday morning after receiving distress calls from some of the victims.

22 US-based Nigerians indicted in medical aid fraud

OUR CORRESPONDENT

DETAILS about the United States-based Nigerians indicted in Houston, Texas on fraudulent charges emerged on Saturday following the release of names of over 31 persons accused in the medical aid fraud. Empowered Newswire reports.

have already been arrested.

He said, contacts were being made with the Nigerian government through the US embassy and consulates, to forestall the possible escape of some of the suspected criminals to Nigeria.

Many US-based Nigerian professionals were reportedly concerned that such developments like the Texas Med-

Nigerians whose arrest was prominent and recorded on video, currently available on the internet and shown around the world is Ededem Edem.

He has been indicted by a Harris County (equivalent of a local government area) grand jury on Nov. 27, 2006, for second-degree felony aggregate theft by a government contractor for

payments of over \$100,000 from the Medicaid program for adult diapers that were never delivered to Medicaid recipients. If convicted Edem and others may face a 2-20 years jail term and a fine of up to \$10,000.

The list of the names of the 31 suspects also indicated that most of them were linked with one of the 32 medical supply businesses involved in making the fraudulent