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Colleagues arrested over engineer's death in 'robbery' attack

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Rita

Four employees of Linksoft Communications Systems, an Abuja based computer software company, have been arrested by the Force Criminal Investigation Department Annex, Alagbon, Lagos, in connection with the death of their colleague, Tochukwu Aneke, under controversial circumstances.

The suspects -Justus Ogbuagwu, Micheal Falode, Rapheal and a fourth yet -to-be identified person- were allegedly arrested more than a month after Tochukwu's death on July 10, 2013. The arrests were said to have been based on a petition to the Inspector General of Police, on behalf of Tochukwu's wife, Rita, and the deceased's father, Crescent Aneke, by their lawyer, Mr. Victor Opara.

Tochukwu allegedly sustained a gunshot injury at one side of his head, around Zuma Rock, Suleja, in an alleged attack by armed

robbers.

His family, however, claimed that no bullet or pellet was found in his head during an autopsy neither was there gunshot holes on the vehicle in which Tochukwu was said to be travelling with his colleague.

Rita told *PUNCH Metro* that she had only been married to the deceased for two years.

She said, "Tochukwu was the Technical Service Manager for the company before his death; he was 34. On the day he died, Tochukwu had travelled for an official meeting in Kano. Usually, attendance at the meeting was rotated among officials in Tochukwu's department.

"He wasn't meant to go this time but his boss, Falode asked him to. Early on July 10, 2013, Tochukwu left home; he had planned to take public transport to Kano. He later called to say that he was travelling with Ogbuagwu in his car instead; he had met Ogbuagwu at Karo junction, Abuja.

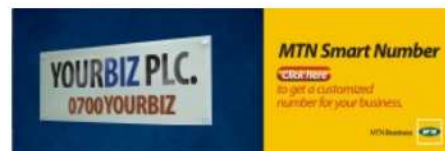
Around 5pm, Rita said she got another call from her husband that the meeting was over. They were on their way back to Abuja; this time, Tochukwu was the one driving. Four hours later, Rita got another call from Tochukwu. They had just arrived at Banawa, Kaduna, where they planned to spend the night.

She said, "Tochukwu had a particular hotel where he passed the night whenever he travelled that way. He told me he would call after he had checked in. Unfortunately, he never did and I fell asleep while waiting for him.

"The following morning, I woke up suddenly at 5am and checked my phone. There were no missed calls from my husband. I called his phone but his lines were switched off, both his personal and official lines. Because I did not have Ogbuagwu's number, I had to call another colleague of Tochukwu, Rapheal.

"I explained to him that I couldn't reach my husband and asked for Ogbuagwu's number. Rapheal sent the number to me but despite calling repeatedly, there was no response."

An hour after she had spoken to Rapheal, he called at 7am and asked to speak with her brother-in-law, Okwudiri, who lived with her. At the time, Okwudiri was away at a job interview. Rita called him on the telephone and asked him to meet with her. When he arrived, she told him to call Rapheal and find out what he wanted.



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Okwudiri was informed by Rapheal that Tochukwu had been involved in an accident and was at the Suleja General Hospital. He was advised to proceed there immediately with Rita.

Unaware that Tochukwu was already dead, Rita advised Okwudiri to go back to his job interview; she would go alone to the hospital.

"Right from the moment I met Rapheal at the hospital, he was dodgy. No one could explain how Tochukwu, who was supposed to be sleeping in Kaduna, got shot at Suleja that same night. It was a lady doctor, who finally came to tell me that Tochukwu had died of a gunshot wound, sustained during an attack by armed robbers," Rita said.

While Tochukwu was said to have died on the spot, Ogbuagwu allegedly escaped to a nearby army formation after taking control of the vehicle and parking it off the road. Tochukwu's corpse was reportedly taken to the Suleja General Hospital by the army personnel. The case was later reported at the Suleja Police station.

The deceased's father, a retired Deputy Superintendent of Police, said, "I had just left Lagos for Enugu when the call came in. I quickly terminated the journey and went to the company's Lagos office at Ikoyi to find out what happened.

"All they did was apologise to me on the incident and offer me an envelope which I believe contained money. I rejected it. Till date, Ogbuagwu never told us himself what happened. All the explanations we got were from other employees of the company."

Opara, the family's lawyer, said he wrote a petition to the IG on August 2, 2103, and received an acknowledgement on August 15, 2013.

He said, "The FCID, Alagbon immediately took over the case. When the police demanded an autopsy, Tochukwu's body was taken to the University Teaching Hospital, Enugu, at the family's request.

"Four autopsies have been done and we have yet to get a single result. All we were told by the doctor was that there was no bullet in Tochukwu's brain. The IPO also saw Ogbuagwu's car, there were no bullet holes on it.

"There are lots of unanswered questions. Although, we are aware that four persons have been arrested, the police have yet to explain what exactly led to the death. All the family is asking for is justice."

When *PUNCH Metro* contacted the Police Public Relations Officer of the FCID, Alagbon, Mr. Archibong, he said he had yet to get details from the Officer-in-Charge.

Linksoft's legal adviser, Mr. Chima Ojinnaka, said, "I am aware that four of our employees were arrested based on a petition by Tochukwu's family. His death was unfortunate as he was well loved by everyone at Linksoft. We want the police to do their job and that those responsible for his death, be brought to justice. Tochukwu was already a manager before his death and had a bright future."

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