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We got victims on dating sites, dispossess them of money, belongings — Suspected kidnappers

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The suspected kidnappers

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Three members of a kidnap gang that picked on their targets through dating sites have been arrested by men of the Inspector-General of Police Intelligence Response Team in Rivers State.

The suspects – Michael Eneji aka General, 30; Nwachukwu Emeka, 22; and Success Okeke, 27 – were rounded up following the killing of one of their victims, Michael Victor, who reportedly went missing on January 6.

City Round learnt that the IRT operatives led by DCP Abba Kyari began to track the gang after Victor's family lodged a complaint at the police unit on January 12, leading to the arrest of the suspects.

The gang's modus operandi was to parade themselves as ladies in search of lovers on the dating site and lure their victims to a lonely spot where they would rob them of their valuables.

One AK-47 rifle and three magazines loaded with 18 rounds of live ammunition were said to have been recovered from them.

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They also reportedly owned up to killing Victor on the day he was kidnapped and led the operatives to Old Onne Road, Rivers State, where they usually carried out their kidnapping and robbery operations.

The Divisional Police Officer in charge of the area, SP Chukwuma Emeka, reportedly recovered Victor's corpse and deposited it at Okrika General Hospital Mortuary on January 7, after a case of an abandoned corpse was reported at the station.

In his confession, the ringleader, Eneji, a native of Gakem community in the Bekwara Local Government Area of Cross River State, said he had been into kidnapping and armed robbery since 2011 when he completed his first degree in Business Administration.

He stated that he identified himself as a naval officer to people to cover his tracks, adding that he had earlier been arrested on two occasions for stealing, kidnapping and murder.

He said, "In 2014, I was arrested and charged with kidnapping and murder of a victim who was a staff member of an oil company. I was sent to prison but my lawyer got me released in 2015 after eight months in prison. He told me that the judge struck out the case.

"We normally pose as women on dating sites. As soon as we lure our victim, we would arrange a meeting. If the target was stubborn, we would ask the only lady among us to speak with the target. If the man insists on seeing the face of the lady, we go on video chats. We also use a small phone that enables us to change our voice from a man's voice to a woman's voice.

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“Once I have been able to establish a contact, I would convince them that I would satisfy their sexual urge. Pretending to be a lady, I would tell them to meet me somewhere around Eleme Road. One of my boys, Success, would go there and meet them as my domestic servant and direct them to my house. I would claim that I live in a mansion where I don’t like disturbance to convince them to come.”

He said as the victims approached the phantom mansion, Okeke would lead them to a deserted place where they would lay in ambush dressed in army uniform.

He added, “We will tie their hands and legs. We collect their valuables, including ATM cards. Emeka would hold the AK-47 in case of any attack while I go to the bank to withdraw whatever the victims have in the bank accounts.

“Our last victim that put us in trouble was picked by my friend, Success (Okeke). I had left our camp with his ATM card when security men on patrol passed by. I was waiting for the password when Abubakar (still at large) called and told me that the man is dead. We all went home and two days later police arrested me.”

Okeke, who hails from Anambra State, a graduate of Microbiology, said joblessness and hardship forced him to join the gang.

He said as the first son, he wanted to make money and impress his family, admitting that his role in the gang was to pick the victims to an agreed spot.

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He stated, “They did not tell me that the victim (Victor) died until police arrested me. Michael (Eneji) had given me his number and asked me to pick him. I called and told him that my madam who works in an oil company requested that I should bring him to the house. I picked him at a bus stop near a filling station.

“On our way, our gang members dressed in military uniform stopped us. It was around 8pm and they asked us why we were passing through the spot. They overpowered the man and dragged him into the bush. I was waiting when I saw a flashlight from security men on patrol. I ran away and later called Michael who told me to wait for him somewhere. I was waiting when policemen arrested me.

Nwachukwu, who owned the AK-47, said he got it from an ex-militant, adding that he knew Michael as a naval officer and gave him the gun to protect him (Nwachukwu) during his grandfather’s burial.

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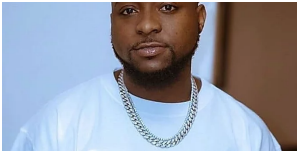


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