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## SACRILEGE! Monarch found dead 18 days after abduction

BY OUR REPORTER ON JANUARY 23, 2016

NATIONAL

## From PAUL OSUYI, Asaba

AFTER 18 days of anxiety and uncertainty over the whereabouts of the Obi of Ubuku-Uku Kingdom in Aniocha South Local Government Area of Delta State, His Royal Majesty, Obi Akaeze Edward Ofolue III, his corpse, on Thursday night, was discovered inside the bush in Umunede.

The decomposing corpse, identified as that of the 52-year old monarch was placed on a palm tree while another corpse suspected to be that of an Hausa was place close to it on a nearby tree in the bush.

The corpse was identified with the shoes and royal apparel which the royal father wore on the fateful Tuesday of January 5 when gunmen took him hostage at a bad spot between Igbodo and Obior.

The driver of the monarch also identified the corpse as that of his boss, according to the Public Relations Officer of the Delta State Police Command, DSP Celestina Kalu who confirmed the unfortunate incident. "I can confirm that a decomposing body was discovered at a bush in Umunede. The man who was with the king on the day of the kidnap has identified the corpse as that of the monarch. We have invited a pathologist to carry out the necessary examination to ascertain whether or not, the corpse which has been deposited at the Federal Medical Centre (FMC), Asaba, is that of the abducted monarch or not," Kalu said.

Magnitude the entire kingdom has been thrown into mourning following the name of the king's

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Economic and social activities have been paralysed. Markets and shops were shut and students who left home for school were sent back home to mourn the royal father. The death of the Obi was being discussed in hush tones by residents and sympathisers.

In the midst of the gloom, however, there was tension as security operatives were seen in strategic http://sunnewsonline.com/new/sacrilege-monarch-found-dead-18-days-after-abduction/





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locations, obviously to ensure peace. At the outskirts of the agrarian community, youths had barricaded the road and made bonfires. They prevented vehicles from entrying the community.

A community source described the king's death as a "setback for the kingdom. The king was so dear to us."

The source disclosed that a young man, an Hausa who allegedly bought the king's GSM hand set was arrested three days ago by the Police, raising hope that the monarch would soon return home.

Recall that Obi Ofolue was cruising in his Toyota Land Cruiser Sports Utility Vehicle (SUV) when gunmen numbering six, suddenly emerged from the bush and shot sporadically into the air. The attack, caused the driver to swerve off the toad and enter into a ditch while attempting to make U-turn and speed off from the assailants.

The king and the driver were reportedly led into the bush but the abandoned SUV was later recovered from the spot by a combined team of policemen attached to the Igbodo police station and local vigilante from Igbodo and Obior communities.

A community source said that the abduction was carried out by suspected herdsmen, adding that a commercial motorcyclist who rode through the deplorable spot few minutes before the incident confirmed that he saw a young man in Hausa attire loitering around the spot.

The source said; "the cyclist who rode back, not later than five minutes saw the SUV with the doors opened without the occupants. He was one of those who drew the attention of the people of the area to the incident."

Initial efforts by determined youths of the community and local vigilante members to trail the abductors and rescue the royal father and his driver were unsuccessful even after they combed the bushes around. They however, vowed to keep vigil until the king was freed unhurt. Meanwhile, their enthusiasm began to wane as the days rolled by without any cheering news.

Celestina Kalu, while confirming the abduction, said it was still unclear if the monarch who was coronated in December 2006 was kidnapped by suspected herdsmen as being speculated.

She assured that Obi Ofolue would be rescued. "We will rescue him. We are on top of the situation. We have spread our drag net far and wide. We have dispatched our men to the forest to comb everywhere. The kidnappers are yet to establish contact with the community. There is no news yet from the traditional ruler."

Meanwhile, the motive of the kidnappers remained unclear as he continued to be held incommunicado by his abductors, who within the first five days, did not make any contact for negotiation for ransom with the distraught residents of Ubulu-Uku community.

The situation fueled speculations that the abduction might not be unconnected with the rivalry over the kingship stool between Ofolue and a certain half brother of his.

As a result, titled chiefs of the kingdom have maintained sealed lips to avoid being dragged into the issue. The fate of the monarch was the topic of discussion as the locals expressed their sympathy and pleaded for his release.

A community source who would not want his name in print debunked insinuation that the monarch was abducted by a faction which rooted for his half brother.

The elderly half-brother who has since dragged the royal father to court over the tussle was allegedly denied the title on the ground that he is not a full blooded prince, his mother, being a Briton. It was a violation of the custom and tradition of Ubulu-Uku people.

Meanwhile, on the sixth day of the abduction, the hostage takers were said to have opened negotiations and demanded a royal ransom of N100 million for the king to breathe the sweet air of freedom again.

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As negotiations for a possible reduction in the price tag was on-going, the king's driver reportedly escaped from the bush. The development may be the reason the hoodlums shut their lines and relocated to another

Anxiety has continued to mount over the king's whereabouts, forcing the subjects to turn to God in prayers for his safety.

During a marathon spiritual exercise organized by members of the community under the aegis of Ubulu-Uku Christian Network, worshippers across Christian denominations converged at the palace gate before proceeding to all the nooks and crannies of the community, in prayers.

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