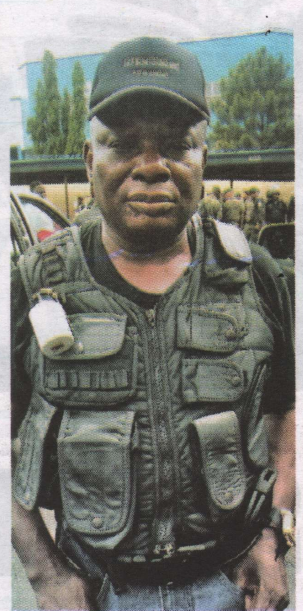




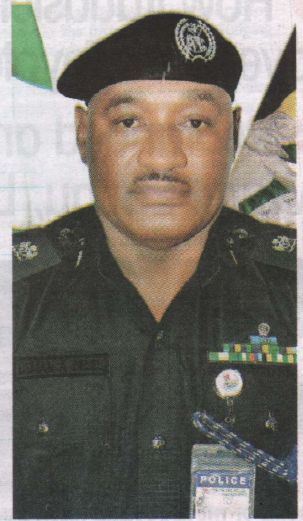
GROUND



THE SUSPECTS



DCP IGWE



CP USMAN

victims escaped to promptly alert the police. Thank God that we were eventually rescued after a serious gun battle that arose between police operatives and kidnappers. Five of them were killed while the rest escaped into the bush."

Kidnapper dies in fight over sharing of ransom money

In a related development, the anti-kidnapping squad has arrested a landlord, 45-year-old, Promise Amadi, who was said to have harboured a seven-man kidnapping gang in his house among whom are two brothers. One of the brothers known as Bishop Ayanaba was said to have killed his brother, Happy Ayanaba, when an argument broke out during the sharing of N1 ransom collected from a victim who was kept in the hideout. The landlord was said to have given himself away when he allegedly gave the kidnappers a spot at the back of his house to bury the dead gang member.

The Commissioner of Police, Mr. Usman Bel-Bel told *Saturday Sun* that the seven-member gang had been living in Amadi's house

for three years. They used his house as a hideout, he said. But on March 15, 2019, the gang kidnapped a businessman, 56-year-old, Balogun Adeleke, from his house and took him to their hideout in Chokocho, Etche village. They demanded a ransom of N17 million from him before the victim's family and friend were only able to raise N1 million.

On March 22, the kidnappers released their victim from their hideout and later met to share the money. But fierce fight broke out following hot exchanges of words between the brothers who were leaders of the gang. In the process, the older beat his younger brother to coma from which he never recovered alive. The Police Commissioner added that it was the deceased's wife who reported the matter at Okechi Police station.

Thereafter, the anti-kidnapping squad swung into action and arrested one of the gang members, Harmony Alex Duuba on March 23. His arrest led to the arrest of the landlord. In fact, it was while they were trying to bury the victim that members of the squad stormed the scene leading to his arrest while the others escaped.

Gang member reveals mode of operation

The 25-year-old man confirmed to *Saturday Sun* that they are seven in number. "We were involved in kidnap of over 10 victims from Port Harcourt. We took them to our hideout in Etche community. We do call the victim's family to bring millions of naira as a ransom. Sometimes if we didn't see them, we would kill the victim or continue to rape the female victim until the money is sent to us."

"We kidnapped a businessman, Balogun Adeleke, and demanded for N17 million. Two brothers wanted to share the money because they are the gang leaders. They fought each other over the sharing of the money. The elder brother killed the younger. It was when we wanted to bury him that the police operatives stormed the burial place at the back of our landlord's house and I was arrested. The landlord was aware that we are kidnappers. We share some of the money with him. It was the landlord that gave us a spot at the back of his house to bury the dead

gang member."

The landlord's story

Amadi, his landlord, admitted being the one who rented the house to the deceased, Happy Ayanaba but denied knowing him and his gang as kidnappers. "He told us that he was a bricklayer by profession," he claimed. "He has spent three years in my house. On that fateful day, I saw that they wanted to fight. I sent them away. Later, the deceased's wife ran to me and started crying. Immediately the gang member came to me to say that they wanted to bury the deceased. I gave them a place at my backyard to bury him before the police detectives came and arrested me."

"I didn't know that they are kidnappers. It was during interrogation that they confessed that they are kidnappers. Before then we used to drink together and do things in common but I didn't know that my tenants are kidnappers. I couldn't have allowed them to bury their gang member in my compound if I knew. It is a lesson to me."

The businessman's account

Giving an account of what happened, the victim, Balogun Adeleke, stated that he was happy to identify one of the kidnappers. "I am a businessman. I was kidnapped right from my house and taken away in my own car to their hideout."

They kept me for seven days and were demanding for a ransom of N17 million. My wife and friend managed to raise N1 million which they paid into my account from where they withdrew it before I was released from their custody.

"It was a very terrible experience. They tied my hands and legs with rope. I saw hell. I didn't know that one day the police operatives will arrest them." He saw what happened as retribution from nemesis. "They shared my N1 million among themselves," he said, "yet they still killed themselves during the sharing." Bel-Bel added that detectives are still going after other gang members at large while investigations are on. It is after that the suspects will be charged to court, he added.