

► How a heartless kidnap gang killed their victim after collecting huge ransom from his relatives

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SHARES VIEWS

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As far as kidnapping business in Nigeria is concerned, they are in their own class. Whereas other gangs honour agreements by releasing their victims once ransom had been paid, they don't. They say there is honour among thieves. But with these ones, the situation is worse: they are as deceptive and heartless as they can be. They don't honour agreement. They raise hope and dash it at will, without qualms. They take hostages but they don't keep them the moment they receive their expected ransom.

Welcome to the world of a 10-man kidnap gang that specializes in killing their victims after receiving ransom from their relatives. But the Special Anti-Robbery Squad of the Anambra State Police Command recently terminated its otherwise flourishing criminal career when they arrested two of the gang members in a carefully coordinated raid. They are, namely, 25-years-old Anthony Robert and 27-years-old Udoka Nwoko.

Anatomy of the kidnap and murder

That was after they kidnapped and gruesomely killed one Amaechi Ike. Earlier, they had demanded N10m from his family. But they succeeded in negotiating the amount down to N3m. This was promptly paid. But all the same, they killed their victim after collecting such a huge sum from his family. Then they hurriedly buried his body in a forest that served as their hideout in Aro Ngwa, Owerinta, Abia State.

Giving some insight into the gang's operation and iniquities, Anambra State Commissioner of Police, Mr. John Abang told *Saturday Sun* that, apart from the Amaechi Ike murder, the gang which had been involved in a series of daredevil kidnappings in Anambra, Imo and Abia states, in one of their operations kidnapped a female victim and raped her to death after collecting millions of naira as ransom. That was before November 3, 2019, when they kidnapped Ike, at Awada Onitsha at about 4:30 pm and took him to an unknown destination.

On receiving the report about Ike's kidnap Abang said he quickly ordered SARS, led by its Commander, Patrick Chukwuemeka Agbazue (Superintendent of Police) to go after the suspects. They trailed them to their hideout in Aro Ngwa, Owerinta, Abia State and, on November 13, 2019, arrested two of them; other gang members escaped

with varying degrees of bullets wounds. All the same, they were tracked and arrested while receiving treatment at a hospital in Umeri.

Accounts provided by the arrested gang members show that despite collecting three million naira from their victim's relative, they kept Amaechi Ike in their custody for six days for no just cause before killing and burying him in their forest hideout, at Owerrinta. Following their arrest, they took the SARS operatives to the spot where they buried him and aided in exhuming his body. One locally made revolver pistol and four 9mm ammunition which they used in killing their victim were also recovered from them.

In the course of the raids, security operatives also rescued three more victims in their custody. So sure were the operatives of the impact of their operations that Agbazue, their commander, affirmed to *Saturday Sun*, that “we have raided all the kidnappers' den and flushed them out of Anambra State.”

Suspects sing in custody

One of the suspects, Anthony Robert admitted the 10-man gang usually kill their victims after collecting huge sums from their relatives. “We kidnap victims and after collecting millions of naira from their relatives, we still shoot them dead. This way we have killed and buried over 15 victims. We buried them in different spots in the bush in Owerrinta in Abia State,” he said.

“But in the case of Amaechi, we were a five-member gang that kidnapped him and took him in our car straight to Abia State. He was in our custody for six days while we waited for the payment of the ransom. We demanded ten million naira but his family brought three million naira to us and yet we killed and buried him. Thereafter, we shared the three million naira among ourselves. That was before SARS operatives arrested us. “

Udoka Nwoko who is one of the gang members charged with guarding their hostages to ensure they don't escape informed that, “we would blindfold them and tie both their hands and legs while waiting for ransom. We had five victims in our den and we were waiting for ransom to be paid for each victim. Immediately their ransom are paid, we still kill the victims. That is our law. We took SARS operatives to where we buried the deceased and assisted them to rescue another five victims in our custody. I also took the SARS operatives to where we kept the pump action rifle we used for operation.”

Giving an insight into the kind of ordeal and emotional trauma they passed through during the period of waiting, a member of Amaechi Ike's family who did not want his name in print said: “It was a terrible situation when they kidnapped our brother and took him to Abia State. They called us and demanded 10 million naira ransom. We negotiated with them until they agreed and we paid three million. We waited for his release but nothing like that happened until we reported the case to SARS operatives. They stormed their den and arrested two suspects who

confessed to have killed our brother after collecting the money from us. They took the operatives to where they buried him and exhumed his body.”

Abang added that the suspects would soon be charged to court at the conclusion of investigation.