

# BLOODY CRIMINAL CAREER

By CHIOMA OKEZIE-OKEH

**NEMESIS** has caught up with two members of the kidnap gang that allegedly kidnapped Napoleon Alale, the 80-year-old father of Sagbama local government area chairman, Embetalepo Alale.

They were said to have released the old man after collecting N35 million and further undisclosed amount from his family. But the suspects identified as Kelvin Dikuro, aka "General Small Voice" and Erememi Captain have not only denied collecting such amount, they also insist on being addressed as sea pirates rather than armed robbers and kidnappers. But details that have come to the fore since after their arrest show that while they may have started their criminal career as sea pirates, they are very much at home with armed robbery and kidnapping.

In fact, the Bayelsa State-based gang members in their confession to the police made many eye-popping revelations about their criminal activities. They confessed to being part of the gang that destroyed a Nigerian Navy gunboat with dynamite at Ekeremo area of the state. Many military men reportedly lost their lives in the attack.

The duo, according to police source were nabbed recently by operatives of Intelligence Response Team (IRT) in the course of tracking down members of the gang involved in the kidnap of the father of Sagbama local government chairman, at Agbere community on May 8, 2020.

## How Kelvin started his criminal career

In an interview with *Saturday Sun*, Kelvin, 24, claimed that he inherited his brother's career who was a notorious kidnapper before his untimely death. "My name is Kelvin Dikuro. I am a native of Nembe, Bayelsa State," he said as he launched into the story of how he started his criminal career before graduating to the level of a vicious killer he is now. "I am a secondary school dropout, a father of one and a professional hairdresser. I own a big flourishing hairdressing saloon at Green Villa in Bayelsa. I am not General Small Voice; that name belongs to my elder brother who is dead. My brother was a kidnapper and he was also into oil bunkering. He was killed because of his illegal activities in our community."

"Unfortunately, he was killed on August 17, 2017, weeks after he was released from police detention. It was when I was going through his things that I found five AK-47 rifles in his room. I decided to check his room because I knew he bought some weapons for his business, which was kidnapping and armed robbery. When he was alive, I used to join them once in a while. This was why I decided to inherit his rifles and start my own gang. People decided to call me my late brother's nickname. I invited few of his boys who were still alive and we formed a five-man gang."

"It was my gang that was responsible for the kidnapping of nine foreigners. All sailors, they were abducted sailors from their boats at sea in Bayelsa State. This was sometime in January 2019. We took them to New Jerusalem,

Bayelsa-based kidnap gang members, one of them, a Camerounian, reveal how they destroyed Navy gunboats, killed soldiers, kidnapped victims, some of them foreigners

an Island in Buguma area of Rivers State. It is one of the safest islands in Bayelsa where we keep our victims. You are sure that no security man will disturb you. It was the militants that gave it that name to show that it is a holy ground that no security man is allowed to enter.

"They spent 14 days in our hideout during which time we fed them with water and noodles. After negotiating with their families for days, they finally paid N5 million. N200, 000 was my share while I was given extra N400, 000 to buy ammunition. I gave the money to the arms dealer who I knew through my late brother."

"Another successful kidnap operation by my gang was also on the high sea in Bayelsa and they were also sailors. With our speedboat we overpowered them and stole everything with them; they were on their way to loading their vessel. We took them to the same hideout and after several days of negotiation, we were paid N10 million. I got a million as my share and that was the highest I have gotten so far."

"Although we were not more than five that went for the operation, there were a lot of checkpoints that we needed to settle or we will lose our victims. The routes that we followed were not guarded by Navy, but other pirates. They will allow you passage if you pay them. This is why I got only one million from N10 million."

According to Kelvin, most of the abductions normally lead to the death of some of their gang members or the victims. "Most of these sailors are heavily armed and it is not always easy to abduct them without any resistance. Several times we killed some of them during a shootout while some of our men were gunned down. Recently, about three foreigners were gunned down. They shot at us and we had no choice than to destroy their boat."

"On the kidnapping of the father of Sagbama Local Government Chairman, I wasn't in town when it took place. I was in Omoku area of Rivers State with my family when it happened. I got a call from one Preye who was aware that my gang carried out the operation. He brought the sum of N1.3 million to me and he asked me to take the money to my boys inside the creek to release the father of the chairman. I ran away with the money because one of our commanders in the creek known as Sunday who was with guns and who also led the kidnapping operation, didn't brief me. I knew that if he had collected the ransom he wouldn't have informed me about it."

"I spent the money and one week later I was arrested in my house. At the time of my arrest, I didn't know if the man has been released. It was at the police station that I heard that Sunday collected N35 million. If I took that amount of money, I will run away from Bayelsa because the commander at the creek will order my execution. We are just sea pirates and it is our normal way of life in our area."



KELVIN AND EREMEMI

## Erememi the Camerounian reveals how he joined gang

The second suspect Erememi, also 24, admitted that the gang that he belongs has killed many soldiers and destroyed their camps. "I am from Cameroun but when I was 10-years-old, my parents moved to Bayelsa in search of jobs. This was how I gradually joined a bad gang led by one Moriekem who is from Southern Ijaw. It was one Owei that introduced me into sea piracy and kidnapping and when I discovered that everyone was doing it, I joined them."

"The first time that I joined them we kidnapped about four oil company workers and a military officer at Ayama Town. We were 10 in number that went for the operation

and all of us were armed with AK-47 rifle with four full loaded magazines. The second kidnapping was at Dodo North oiling that belongs to Shell Petroleum Development and we kidnapped one of the workers on the rig at Ekeremo Local government area of Bayelsa State."

"It was Moriekem that usually negotiate with the company. I don't know how much was paid as ransom but the least amount that I received as my share was N500, 000. We were warned not to question any amount given to us."

"During some of our exploits we destroyed a Navy houseboat with a dynamite killing the soldiers in the boat at Ekeremo. We decided to attack them because it was that houseboat that they used to destroy some of our camps."

"Our gang also ambushed and killed four soldiers and took away their rifles. Most of the rifles that we used in operations were taken

from those slain soldiers. We also attacked a merchant vessel named Ambica in Dodo River and killed four military officers attached to them and went away with their rifles. I have also gone for kidnapping in Rivers State where the police in an attempt to rescue our victim shot me on my right hand. This is how I got this scar."

Begging for forgiveness, he promised to turn a new leaf and return to Cameroun and become a better person. "My parents left Nigeria when they lost their jobs. I was already a militant and as a cultist I knew how to survive. This was why I did not travel back with them. Please, forgive me and deport me to my country. I am sorry and I promise to change for good. I am sorry that many military men died in the process but I swear that my job was to help Moriekem load the rifle while he does the shooting."