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Kidnapped School Boy Murdered

From Ernest Chinwo in Calabar, 10.19.2007

A10-year old schoolboy kidnapped from his school in Calabar last week has been confirmed murdered by his abductors.

The boy, Joseph Edem (Junior) was abducted from Grace and Gold school in Calabar during school hours by one Ayiere Godsgift (alias Alex), a former employee of his father who deceived the school authorities that the boy's father, Chief Joseph Okon Edem needed the boy in Port Harcourt. Chief Edem works for an Oil Company in Port Harcourt.

Chief Edem said in Calabar that after luring the boy from school, the abductor, Godsgift called him with a GSM phone with the number hidden. He said he still suspected the voice to be that of his former employee and called him by his name, Alex. According to Edem, Alex retorted, "shut up. I am not Alex. I am a militant. Is your son lost?" Edem said the abductors then demanded three million naira ransom for the release of the boy and gave him series of instructions on how to bring the money to Ikom, about 300 kilometers from Calabar.

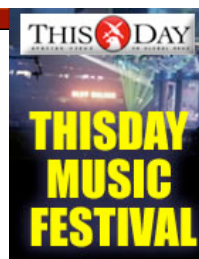
He said that on reaching Ikom, he was directed to take the money to Lisbon Hotel from where he was directed to five other locations before he was asked to take the money in a 'Ghana-must go' bag to a road-side GSM operator stand and leave it there. He said he was in constant communication with the abductors and that on dropping the money, a commercial motorcycle with a passenger said to be a former councilor in the area came to pick the money and were arrested by the Police who had been keeping tab on his movement.

He said those arrested confirmed that Alex was the leader of the team. Edem said that even after the arrest of the two men, Alex called him the following day to request that he still sends the ransom or he Edem would be killed. Luck however ran out of Alex when he returned to Calabar last Tuesday to pick his belongings unknown to him that the Police had kept surveillance over the house. He was subsequently arrested by his neighbours and handed over to the Police. The Cross River State Commissioner of Police, Mr. Innocent Ilozuoke confirmed the incident. He said that Alex confessed he abducted the boy and took him to Ikom where he was strangled when the Father failed to pay the ransom. He said the police had confirmed the case of kidnap and would conduct an autopsy to determine the cause of death. Edem however said Alex took the police to a Bendeghe village in Ikom Local government area where the boy was buried in a shallow grave. He said the body had been exhumed and an autopsy conducted, which revealed that the boy was strangled. He said the remains of the boy was buried Thursday

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