

Suspected assassins kill Gov's aide

By AbdulSalam
Muhammad, Aliyu Dangida,
Tina Anthony, Jimitota
Onoyume & Anayo Okoli

● 6 pirates shot dead in Onitsha

KANO — UNKNOWN Kassailants, Sunday evening, hacked to death Al-haji Alqasim Ahmad Gwaram, the Special Adviser to Governor Sule Lamido of Jigawa State on Revenue, at his private residence in Naibawa quarters, Kano.

This was three days after an

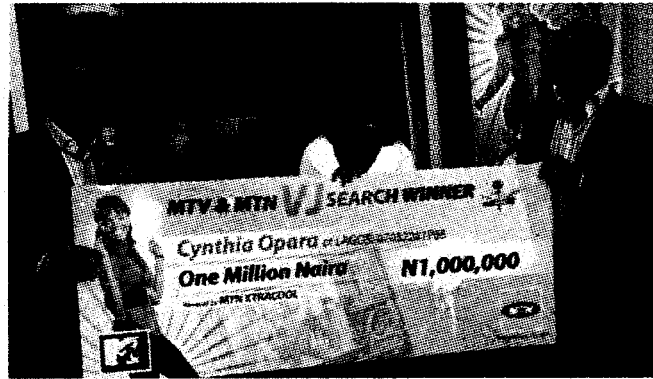
attempt on the life of the Chief Imam of Ungwa Uku Central Mosque at the same Naibawa area was foiled.

A similar attempt on the life

of the Chief of Staff, Government House, Port Harcourt, Mr. Nyesom Wike, collapsed Sunday night. Gunmen had opened fire on Mr. Wike's black Prado Jeep with number plate RVGH 586 around Garrison area of Aba express road at about 8 p.m.

And in Onitsha, Anambra State, six sea pirates died in a gun battle with Marine Police last Thursday. One local vigilance operative and a police

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MTV/MTN VJ WINNER: From left: Mr Kola Oyeyemi, GM Consumer Marketing, MTN Nigeria; Cynthia Okpara, MTV/MTN VJ search winner; and Mr Femi Otegbaiye, Brand Manager, MTV Nigeria & Ghana, at the presentation of a dummy cheque for N1m to the MTV/MTN VJ search winner in Lagos, last weekend.

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constable also died in the clash.

Jigawa assassination

Alhaji Alqasim Ahmad Gwaram, 55, according to sources, had just returned home from a nearby mosque after observing his prayers when the suspected assailants who apparently had laid ambush nearby pounced on him killing him.

Younger brother to the deceased, Alhaji Bala Ahmad, told *Vanguard* that the family were convinced that those who carried out the act were "hired assassins." He said the assassins made away with his Hon-

da car to aid their escape, but left behind his handset and other valuables.

Bala Ahmad said the suspected assassins broke the deceased's left hand, stripped him of his trousers with which they blindfolded him before killing him.

The body of the late Gwaram was discovered by the Divisional Police Officer in charge of the area, sandwiched between two cars parked in the compound after a distress call by a good Samaritan.

According to the family spokesman, the entire household was ignorant of the happening until the arrival of the police team, adding that the house help had earlier prepared his food and switched on the generator to illuminate the compound.

The body was immediately taken to the Murtala Muhammad General Hospital in Kano.

The late Alhaji Alqasim Ahmad Gwaram, a journalist turned banker, retired as a Principal Manager in the defunct Bank of the North. He was appointed Special Adviser to Governor Lamido on Revenue four months ago. He is survived by four widows and 13 children.

Efforts to get the police image-maker in Kano State, Alhaji Baba Muhammad, to comment on the incident failed. He told reporters that the command would issue a statement later.

The Jigawa Deputy Governor, Alhaji Ahmad Muhammad, who led a government delegation on a condolence visit to the deceased's family described him as "a complete gentleman who died at a time his services were needed most."

Alhaji Ahmad appealed to the relevant security agencies to unravel the perpetrators of the dastardly act for appropriate punishment.

Alqasim Ahmad Gwaram has since been buried according to Islamic rites.

In a related development, the Permanent Secretary, Special Services, to the Jigawa State Government, Alhaji Audu Idi unexpectedly slumped and died yesterday.

Audu Idi was said to have collapsed while waiting for his wife to serve his breakfast before em-

barking on a journey to Kano.

Idi has since been buried in his country home, Kazaure, according to Islamic rites.

Rivers Govt House Chief of Staff shot

The state Police PRO in Port Harcourt, Mrs. Baresua Ireju, who confirmed the shooting of the Chief of Staff to *Vanguard* said his driver received bullet injuries and was rushed to the hospital. She said no arrest had been made. The police are already investigating to uncover those behind the sinister act.

The motive of the assailants could not be established but spokesman for the Joint Task Force in the state, Lt-Col Sagir Musa, said it was a clear case of assassination attempt. He said the Prado Jeep had about 12 bullet holes.

According to him, the JTF and the Director of SSS in the state were among those who rushed to the scene minutes after it occurred. He pledged that the soldiers would get to the root of the problem.

An eyewitness told *Vanguard* that from the way the assailants carried out their operation, it was likely they were out to abduct the Chief of Staff. The source said they would have successfully gunned him down if killing him had been their aim, adding that they shot from the driver's side and deflated three of the tyres. They also punctured the fuel tank of the vehicle.

How Nwike escaped is still a mystery to many. At the time of filing this report, the vehicle had been towed to Government House.

This development came about three weeks after one of the drivers of the DPP governorship candidate in the state was shot by suspected assassins. He was also lucky to survive the attack.

Already, the Rivers State government appears set to partner with the French government to enhance security of life and property in the state. The Consul General of France in the country, Mr. Erwan De Gouvello, dropped this

hint in the state after a meeting with Governor Rotimi Amaechi.

Mr. De Gouvello said he was in Port Harcourt to meet with the governor because of a lot of French citizens living and doing business in the state, particularly those in the oil and gas sector.

Sea Pirates, Police clash in Onitsha

Vanguard learnt that the Otuocha vigilance group received a tip-off that sea pirates were preparing to strike and immediately informed the Onitsha Marine Police and the Police in Asaba who immediately swung into action and blocked the escape route of the suspected pirates.

The pirates, numbering six, sensing danger decided to escape through the Nzam route but were blocked by the Police. A clash soon ensued with the pirates allegedly opening fire to which the police responded.

"The pirates managed to escape and were pursued up to the boundary towns of Akura in Kogi State and Ozigo in Edo State where a severe gun battle ensued resulting in three of the pirates being shot dead while a police constable attached to Onitsha Marine and a local vigilance operative from Asaba were gunned down by the pirates," a police source said.

Also, a police inspector attached to the Asaba/Marine sustained severe bullet wounds.

The remaining three pirates left their boats, three guns and other belongings and fled for their lives. They were, however, not lucky as they were caught by vigilance operatives in the area who shot them dead.

Conducting newsmen round the recovered boat and one of the dead pirates yesterday at Onitsha Marine, the Onitsha Area Commander, Mr Rasheed Akintunde, accompanied by (ASP) Amaebi Datuwei said: "At a point, we met face to face and they fired at us and managed to escape when we responded. Three guns, one AK47 rifle and two Lar rifles were recovered including their boat."

s N1bn budget ministers' vehicles

monetisation policy earlier introduced by the immediate past administration.

The 2008 budget proposals for SMEDAN presented by Mr. Femi Adebisi, a director in the agency on behalf of the Director-General, Mrs. Adelaja, was turned down by the Committee.

"It is not the custom of the Senate for assistants to come and present budget proposals to us. We are particularly interested in what you are going to present to us for many reasons. Your agency is very important, taking a look at the 7-point agenda of this administration. We have to empower your agency to be able to reduce the rate of unemployment in Nigeria. To us in the Senate, your report is unacceptable. I think it is better you get across to her, if she doesn't come down here before we work on the final passing of the budget, I can assure you that you are going to have zero allocation."

Also yesterday, the Senate Committees on Education and Information and Media commenced their hearings on the budgetary proposals for the ministries and parastatals under their purview.