

Horror in Niger Delta: Kidnapped perm sec found dead

• Militant leader killed by rival gang

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THE riverine settlement of Okodi in the Ogbia Local Government Area of Bayelsa State was yesterday thrown into mourning as the body of the kidnapped permanent secretary in the Governor's Office, Dr. Epariba Apiri, was found dead floating in the creek.

Also, it was a weekend of horror in the Southern Ijaw council area of the state as assailants on the trail of injured militant leader, Prince Igodo, finally caught up with him at Emete in the council area and killed him, bringing to an end his reign in the troubled area.

Although kidnapping in the Niger Delta is often for pecuniary reason, an impeccable source told *Sunday Vanguard* that the late permanent

secretary's abduction and subsequent killing had communal undertone. According to the source, Apiri's abduction and killing might not be unconnected with the intra-communal crisis allegedly rocking his Okodi community.

The deceased, a staff of the ministry of budget and planning before his appointment as a permanent secretary and posting to the Governor's Office, was reportedly kidnapped by some unknown gunmen Friday at about 1 a.m. at Okodi community where he had gone to attend a wake keep ceremony. *Sunday Vanguard* learnt that the deceased who was hale and hearty on the fateful day having spent some time at the wake ground decided to retire to his country home. He was said to have left the arena and going home alone when he was abducted by some unknown youths and taken to an unknown

destination. It was however learnt that before the community could organize a search party to comb all the nooks and crannies of the area the bullet-riddled body of the deceased was found floating yesterday morning by the natives.

The deceased's wife who was about travelling to Spain, it was further gathered, had to put off the trip following the tragic incident. Apiri's colleagues who spoke anonymously described the report filtering into their ears as shocking. According to them, the late permanent secretary was a humble and hardworking man who will not hurt a fly. Bayelsa police relations officer (PPRO), Ibokette Iniobong, confirmed the killing, but assured that the police were on top of the matter. The commander of the Joint Task Force in the state, Lt. Col Chris Musa, also confirmed the incident but said "we want to get the details. Once we confirm, we will let you know." In a related development, it was a weekend of anguish in Southern Ijaw council area as assailants in pursuit of the injured

militant leader, Prince Igodo, finally caught up with him at Emete in the council area and killed him. Igodo had been in hiding since the attack on his base at Opuama that left him injured in both legs before his assailants believed to be loyal to a Rivers State warlord, located him and ended his life.

Sunday Vanguard gathered that Igodo met a slow and painful death about 4.30 p.m. Friday as his two hands were cut off and left to bleed to death. An impeccable source in the area confirmed that Igodo was traced to Emete in Southern Ijaw local government area where he was eventually killed. "Yes, it is true they have killed him. You know Igodo was terrorising the people. We tried to advise him, but he would not listen. A fly that refuses to heed advice will follow the corpse into the grave", the source stated.

Contacted, the state PPRO only said the police were on the matter just as the JTF could only assure that they will speak once they had the details.