

CrimeAlert

By Evelyn Usman

RESIDENTS of Elerinko Estate in Ijoko-Ota area of Ogun State were jolted from sleep sometime last month by sounds of gunshots within the vicinity. Time was 2 a.m. The fear-stricken residents concluded that the shots were from robbers who had earlier written to inform them that they would strike at any given time and also advised them to keep cash and other valuables waiting for them or risk losing their lives.

Some of them were said to have brought out the cash kept aside for the unwelcome visitors, while others hid in different locations in their apartments, praying not to fall prey to robbers' bullets. When the firing stopped, the residents remained indoors, unsure of the purported invaders next motive.

Shocking discovery: It was not the robbers, after all. In the morning, the sporadic shooting was discovered not to have been from the dreaded men of the underworld. Rather, the lifeless body of roadside trader simply identified as Mallam Bello, was discovered in an uncompleted building in the estate. On closer observation, residents told *Crime Alert* that they discovered that the body of the 22-year-old Bello, was dragged from where he was shot to the uncompleted building.

Culprit identified: While they were still pondering the discovery, one of the residents alleged that the shot was from a mobile policeman identified as Corporal Chris Ojeaga. His claim was further corroborated by a member of the vigilante group.

Make shift shop

According to one of the residents who gave his name as Ojejo, "Bello (the deceased) moved into this vicinity two months ago. He came from Abeokuta where he served and was settled. He built his make-shift shop where he sold provisions, which also served as home for him. He usually slept on a wooden chair in front of the kiosk.

"Someone who saw it all said immediately the first shot was fired, the policeman's voice was heard calling Bello who was sleeping on his bench. On getting to where he was, he fired some shots into the air which alerted members of a vigilante group. Thereafter, he bought some cigarettes from Bello.

Vigilante group intervenes: Members of the vigilante came and exchanged pleasantries with the policeman and he asked one of them to give him his torch. He (vigilante) told him that he was charging it in a nearby church.

"He told the vigilante man to go and get it from the church while the other one left. Midway,

Policeman allegedly shoots trader dead, dumps body in uncompleted building

they said they heard a volley of gunshots which made the vigilante to run as fast as his legs could carry him into the church. While inside the church, the policeman traced him there and warned him not to return to the junction where Bello's kiosk is. He agreed. Some people also claimed to have seen the policeman dragging the body of Bello into the uncompleted building."

More revelations: Another resident also claimed that immediately the gunshots stopped, the gate leading to the Mobile Policeman's apartment was heard opening, one of the tenants said he heard the policeman's wife ask him where he was coming from. The tenant claimed to have sighted him and his wife leaving their apartment

and returning later.

One other resident who would not want his name in print said: "While we were all waiting at the sight of the lifeless body of Bello, the Mobile policeman did not utter a word. The case was reported at the Sango Police division following which the policeman was arrested."

At the Police station: Police sources at the Ogun State Police Command told *Crime Alert* that during investigation, Corporal Ojeaga denied culpability but he was later shocked when one of the residents gave details before policemen at Sango division stating how he saw him fire the shot that snuffed life out of Bello.

During investigation, it was reportedly discovered that the bullet that killed Bello was a Police issue. It was also reportedly discovered that Corporal Ojeaga went home with his rifle that night. Police sources hinted that

he claimed to have submitted his rifle at about 5pm that day. But further investigation, as learnt, revealed that he was supposed to be off duty that day and as such, ought not to be with his rifle at all.

Impeccable sources revealed that when checks were carried out, it was discovered that the rifle was returned at about 5am, some hours after the alleged deed was done.

Corporal Ojeaga was later transferred to the State Criminal Investigations Department, Elewe-Eran, Abeokuta, where operatives at the Homicide section were said to still be investigating the matter.

Hausa community mourns, demands justice

Meanwhile, relatives of the late Bello, majority of whom were from Abeokuta thronged Elerinko to mourn their brother. In an emotion-laden tone, one of them who gave his name as Salihu said:

"If we had known he would be killed like a chicken, we would have advised him against leaving Abeokuta. We have buried our brother after getting permission from the police and doctor's

report too. We were made to understand that the clothes the policeman wore that fateful day had blood stains

"We were also made to understand that he had owned up to bringing his rifle home that night.

"We are convinced that he has a hand in our brothers death because we were told that he earlier called his wife, who is also a police woman, through the landlord that he won't be coming home that night. But he returned and drove straight to Bello's kiosk without entering his house located very close to our brother's kiosk. He woke Bello up after the first shot which alerted members of a vigilante group. Those who saw him shooting have told the police. But, we wonder why nothing has been said about the incident. All we want is justice. The fact remains that our brother is gone and will never return but his killer must be brought to book. Only that will appease us."

However, when the spokesman of Ogun State Police Command, Muyiwa Adejobi, a Deputy Superintendent of Police, was contacted, he told *Crime Alert* that he was just back from an official assignment and does not know about the incident.



• Uncompleted building

• Bullet-ridden kiosk