

News

Two star witnesses died mysteriously after testifying against Nyako, EFCC tells court

●Says witnesses are afraid to testify

By Ikechukwu Nnochiri

ABUJA—THE Economic and Financial Crimes Commission, EFCC, has told the Federal High Court sitting in Abuja that two key witnesses it lined up to testify against the former governor of Adamawa State, Admiral Murtala Nyako (rtd), who is facing money laundering charge, have died under mysterious circumstances.

The EFCC, in a counter-affidavit deposed to by one of its lead detectives, Mr. Adekunle Christopher Odojin, said the witnesses, Ma'aji Mohammed Iro and Abdulmalik Dalhatu, were found dead shortly after they came to its office and testified against the accused former governor.

Late Iro was Regional Manager of Zenith Bank Plc, North East, and was in charge of the accounts of Adamawa State with the bank.

He was said to have adduced incriminating evidence against Nyako who is answering to a 37-count criminal charge alongside his son, Abdulaziz, a serving Senator.

They are facing trial alongside their alleged accomplices — Zulkifikk Abba and Abubakar Aliyu.

Five companies that allegedly served as conduit pipes for the illegal diversion of the funds — Blue Opal Limited, Sebore Farms & Extension Limited, Pagoda Fortunes Limited, Tower Assets Management Limited and Crust Energy Limited— were equally charged as the 5th to 9th accused persons.

Trial Justice Evoh Chukwu had on Friday granted the accused persons bail to the tune of N350 million each.

They were asked to produce two persons to stand as sureties or in the alternative, provide one surety who must be a serving Director in any Federal Government establishment.

The surety, according to the court, must show a proof of ownership of landed property in Abuja, depose to an affidavit of means before the Deputy Chief Registrar of the High Court as well as show evidence of three years tax payment.

Besides, the accused persons were directed to surrender their International Passports to the court alongside their two recent passport photographs, even as the court slated September 30 to commence their trial.

EFCC kicks against bail

However, EFCC is kicking against their release on bail, decrying that, "two of our crucial witnesses, Ma'aji Mohammed Iro and Abdulmalik Dalhatu have

died in mysterious circumstances and this has instilled fear in other prospective witnesses in this case."

The anti-graft agency expressed its fear that Nyako and his son would go into hiding.

It told the court: "Securing the arrest of the 1st and 2nd accused persons was very difficult as they became fugitives upon becoming aware of the ongoing investigation against them by the commission.

"That the commission obtained a warrant of arrest dated January 28, 2015, against the 1st and 2nd accused persons. The said warrant of arrest is marked as Exhibit RJ1.

"That the commission had to declare the 1st and 2nd

accused persons wanted in the national dailies and other media before they could be found after several months."

Why Nyako was arrested

Narrating what led to the arrest and trial of the ex-governor, EFCC, through Odojin, who was a member of the team assigned to investigate the allegation against the accused persons, averred:

"That following a petition received by the commission in October 2011 alleging gross abuse of office against the 1st accused and other criminal misappropriation of moneys running into tens of billions of Naira of the funds of Adamawa State Government.

"The commission swung into action and carried out discreet

investigation into the said allegations.

"That the investigations carried out by my team revealed the following: a) That the 1st and 2nd accused are the owners of the 6th accused, Sebore Farms & Extension Limited, which they operate by themselves.

"That several fictitious contracts running into billions of Naira were awarded to the said 6th accused while the 1st accused was governor of Adamawa State.

"That on the instruction of the 1st accused Ma'aji Mohammed Iro made several cash lodgements running into billions of Naira into the accounts of several companies and individuals including the accounts of the 6th and 9th (Crust Energy Limited) accused persons, all from the accounts of Adamawa State Government for no specific reason.



SUNDAY SERVICE: From left: Daughter of the Vice President, Miss. Kanyinsola Osinbajo; Vice President Yemi Osinbajo; former Women Affairs Minister, Senator Helen Esuene; Executive Secretary, Christian Pilgrims Commission, Mr. John Kennedy Opara; Administrator, Aso Villa Chapel, Mr. Abba Mshelia and Guest Preacher, Pastor Seyi Malom after the Sunday Service at the Aso Villa Chapel, State House, Abuja, yesterday. Photo: Abayomi Adeshida.

Close ranks to save Nigeria from rejected PDP, forum tells APC Senators

By Soni Daniel

ABUJA—THE forum of ex-legacy parties that metamorphosed into the All Progressives Congress, APC, has asked Senators elected on the platform of the ruling party to close ranks and work with President Muhammadu Buhari to rescue Nigerians from the hardships imposed on them by the People's Democratic Party, PDP.

The forum said in a communique made available to Vanguard in Abuja, yesterday, that it was wrong for some selfish APC

senators to allow the PDP which they claimed had been rejected by Nigerians at the polls to take a key position meant for the ruling party in the National Assembly.

The document which was jointly endorsed by the group's National Chairman, Yusuf Tabuka and the Secretary, Ajayi Nicholas, pleaded with its members in the NASS to stop further deprivation of the rights and privileges of the APC by the minority PDP in the legislature because of a few greedy members.

It said: "We demand that our senators quickly resolve any

differences they may have and move on to serve the overall interest of Nigerians. It is on record that Nigerians rejected the PDP at the polls and any attempt to impose themselves through the Senate back door must be resisted by well-meaning Nigerians and our senators.

"It is suicidal for the growth of our democracy for Nigerians to reject a political party at the polls only for the same party to come back to the leadership of our Senate where the APC was given a clear majority by the Nigerian people to lead the Senate.