

# How hit squad killed man who laid trap for genocide suspect

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**Munuhe had planned to deliver Kabuga to FBI agents in Nairobi.**



The house in Karen, Nairobi where Mr William Munuhe was found dead in 2003 after a botched attempt to lure Rwandan fugitive Felicien Kabuga into an FBI trap. Mr Kabuga was finally arrested in France on May 16, 2020. PHOTO | FILE | NATION MEDIA GROUP

**The death of Mr Munuhe, then a 27-year-old bachelor, was made to look like suicide. For three days, the security team tried frantically to contact the businessman on his cell phone without success.**

The arrest of Rwandan fugitive Felicien Kabuga by French police on Saturday brings to mind previous failed efforts to arrest him and the casualties of the attempts.

In 2003, a young Kenyan businessman helping agents from the US Federal Bureau of Investigations (FBI) to track down Mr Kabuga was murdered by a hit squad.

Mr William Mwaura Munuhe was killed only hours before the genocide suspect with a USD5 million (Sh400 million) bounty on his head could walk into a trap laid at the businessman's home in Karen, Nairobi.

## 'SUICIDE'

The death of Mr Munuhe, then a 27-year-old bachelor, was made to look like suicide, police said.

A burning charcoal stove had been placed next to his bed to make it look like he had died of carbon monoxide poisoning.

But the fact of the matter was that he was shot in the head with the bullet entering through his ear.

Mr Munuhe lay dead for three days before his body was found by Kenyan and US security agents.

## LURE KABUGA

The young businessman had agreed to lure Mr Kabuga to his home so that the FBI agents could arrest him.

They lay in wait outside the house in the upmarket suburb, backed by over 20 criminal investigations detectives and officers from the Special Crime Prevention Unit, who were not given the name of the informer.

They monitored all callers at Mr Munuhe's house but called off the operation after six hours, at 7pm, when Mr Kabuga failed to show up.

There was what had been termed as a business meeting with Mr Kabuga on January 5, 2003 but before it could take place, someone got wind of the planned ambush and a day before the meeting was due, the hit squad knocked at Mr Munuhe's door.

## PHONE CALLS

For three days, the security team tried frantically to contact the businessman on his cell phone without success.

Finally, they broke into the house where he lived alone and made their gruesome discovery.

Mr Kabuga had been on the run as he was being sought by the United Nations and the US for being a key mastermind of the 1994 Rwanda genocide that saw the killing of one million Tutsis and moderate Hutus.

The US has offered a reward of \$5 million for his arrest.

He was being sought by the Rwandan war crimes tribunal in Arusha, Tanzania, along with other fugitives.

US officials were baffled at how the hit squad uncovered the plan to ambush Mr Kabuga and then killed their link man within such a short period.

## FALLING-OUT

Intelligence sources claimed the businessman, Mr Kabuga and a former government official were once close allies.

But for unknown reasons, Mr Munuhe and the civil servant fell out.

This, sources said, raised fears that Mr Munuhe could become an informer and expose the link between the government official and the fugitive and also reveal Mr Kabuga's whereabouts.

After Mr Munuhe and the civil servant fell out, Mr Munuhe went to the US embassy and said he could help them track down the Rwandan fugitive.

## MEETINGS

It is understood that Mr Munuhe had a series of meetings with US security officials to plan how to lure Mr Kabuga from his hideout.

The Nation learnt that it was the civil servant who introduced Mr Munuhe to the fugitive as a business associate. But even when they were allies, the businessman never came to know where the Rwandan

lived.

The only alternative, therefore, was to lure Mr Kabuga to Mr Munuhe's house under the pretext of a business meeting.

After the US authorities were convinced their plan was watertight, they booked an appointment with former CID Director Francis Sang on the morning of January 16, 2003 and asked him for reinforcements to help capture Mr Kabuga.

## SCANTY DETAILS

It is understood the Americans gave the CID director only scanty details of the plan, not even revealing the name of their informer.

"They told me they knew Kabuga was going to be delivered to a certain house in Karen and they wanted our officers to back their operation," said Mr Sang.

He dismissed suggestions that Mr Munuhe was betrayed by police officers or other government officials.

The Kenyan team accompanied the US officials for the undercover operation later in the day.

But they called off the operation at 7pm when Mr Kabuga failed to turn up and Mr Munuhe failed to answer their calls.

## INFORMER KILLED

They did not know he had been killed and, for the next two days, unsuccessfully tried to trace him on his mobile phone.

When the agents finally broke down the door to Mr Munuhe's bedroom, they found his body lying on the bed, face up and covered with a blanket.

A charcoal stove was found next to the bed and all the windows were locked.

Sources close to the investigators said the killers wanted to give the impression that Mr Munuhe died as a result of inhaling carbon monoxide fumes.

What baffled the Americans was why Kenyan police treated the case as "sudden death".

A check by the Nation at the City Mortuary revealed the death was only registered as "sudden".

**By NATION TEAM**