

SOLDIER DETAINED FOR BUILDING IN WETLAND

BY PATRICK OKINO

A recently discharged Uganda People's Defence Forces officer, Joel Okao, has been detained by the Environment Protection Police over building in a wetland and giving part of it to residents.

Nine permanent buildings, according to the Police conducting an operation on wetland encroachment, will be demolished because they are on gazetted wetland.

"All these structures are in a wetland, which is against the law. We shall investigate and charge the landlord accordingly," Exavius Sekanabo said while ordering the arrest of the soldier.

Okao, 56, was arrested after showing about six Police officers the markstone indicating the boundary between the wetland and dry land. The Police noticed that the markstone had been removed from its original position and transferred to the wetland.

BLAME GAME

It then turned into a blame game as an old woman,



Police arresting Okao in Anywalo-nino village, Lira district

identified as Lucy Ogweng, accused the Police of planting the markstone.

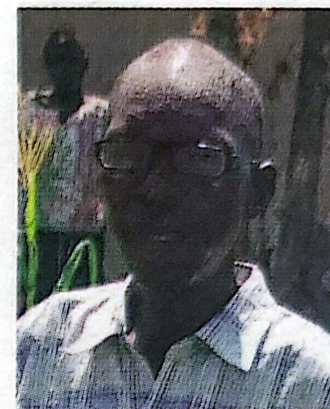
"This markstone was put by Police and they were wearing uniform. Nobody ever bothered to uproot it," she said.

When questioned by the officers, Okao shifted

the blame to the area LC1 chairperson, but failed to mention his name.

SCHOOL

King's Land Nursery and Primary School, located at Anywalo-nino village, also in the same area, risk being demolished because it was



Joel Okao

constructed in a wetland.

"They removed the markstone and put this classroom block. The school risks being closed," Pabious Otika, the Lira district environment officer, said.

The school's director, Alex Ogwal, said the claim that he uprooted the markstone and changed its position was wrong.

"They planted the markstones in 2015, but I put up the structures in 2013. So my school is not in a wetland," he said.

"I was given permission by the National Environment Management Authority to build the school on this land," he added.