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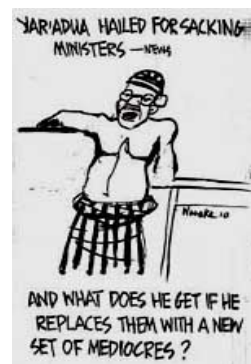
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Countryman



Robbers block Benin - Asaba Expressway

VINCENT ADEKOYE, *Benin*

Delta State Commissioner of Police, Mr. Jacob Oshiomogo was among travellers on the Benin-Asaba expressway that narrowly escaped death in the hands of armed robbers who blocked all the major roads leading to Edo State as part of the continued onslaught on the state.

The development came barely 24 hours after six officers of the Edo Police Command were gunned down by suspected armed robbers on the same route.

Sources said the same gang of dare devil robbers armed with about eight general purpose machine guns and other high caliber ammunition, took over the highways robbing unsuspecting travellers at will.

Some of the villagers on the road have abandoned their houses for fear of being hit by stray bullets.

Speaking with newsmen in his office early yesterday, the State Commissioner of Police, Mr. Dalami Ya'Adua, who confirmed the development said it was sad that his men died in that manner saying the robbers actually laid ambush and opened fire on them.

"The robbers opened fire on my men who were on their way to Abudu to rescue a bullion van that was attacked by robbers.

However, despite the level of casualty, we were still able to get two of the robbers and one was killed.

"In the same manner, one of the robber shot that later died was buried in a shallow grave by his colleagues at a village along the Benin-Auchi road. The villagers sighted them and informed us and we have mobilized to go and exhume the corpse.

"I want to say that even with the latest development; we are not defeated in any way. We shall continue to give robbers the rough treatment they deserve so that the people of the state can have peace," the Edo CP said.

On the incident involving the Delta State Police Commissioner, he said that commissioner was on his way from Abuja when his convoy ran into the robbers.

"His men replied the robbers and chased them away. The driver of the Delta Commissioner was injured by bullet in the waist" he said.

However, Yar'Adua said the concerted efforts of the men of the Edo State Police Command and their Delta State counterpart, yielded some results as they traced the men and retrieved 11 guns, taken away by the fleeing robbers from the killed policemen on Wednesday.

He said a team of policemen comprising the men of the state anti-robbery squad and some riot policemen engaged the robbers at Abudu and recovered the Hilux patrol van which they took from the fallen policemen after chasing them into the bush.

The commissioner who said the police recovered an undisclosed sum of money, another AK 47 and some ammunition from one of the vehicles in which the robbers were operating, a Mercedes Benz ML 320, said one of the robbers was found dead in the bush close to the Abudu area.

As at press time, traffic was still very few on some of the major roads that linked the Edo State capital.

The situation also led to a rise in the number of passengers at the Benin airport since many passengers were afraid of traveling by road.

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