

Bank robbery: Bandits kill inspector, 2 others

VINCENT ADEKOYE, *Benin City*

NEWLY appointed Commissioner of Police in Edo State, Mr Bala Hassan received baptism of fire, Sunday night, when dare-devil armed robbers in a commando-style stormed a first generation bank in Benin City, killing a Police inspector, a sergeant, a constable and one civilian.

Mr Hassan had taken over from Mr Muktar Abass, as the state police boss, Saturday morning.

However, the fragile peace enjoyed by residents of the ancient city in the past few weeks was ruptured, following a deadly late night bank robbery.

While a source told newsmen at the bank premises that some undisclosed amount of money running into several millions of naira were carted away from the bank, Mr. Hassan, who confirmed the killing said the robbers were about to get access to the strong

room of the bank when his men got to the scene of the robbery.

The bank robbery, which came 24 hours after the resumption of duty of Mr. Hassan, occurred exactly two months after another gang of robbers blew up a branch of a commercial bank at Iguobazuwa, near Benin in an attempt to assess the vault.

Confirming the development, the visibly worried police commissioner, who addressed newsmen in his office said the robbers came with some corrosive substances strongly believed to be acid and hydrocarbon gas with which they melt all the strong steel protectors that were built to secure the bank.

Said he: "It is true that a gang of armed robbers invaded the ring road branch of (a bank) Sunday night. They came in three vehicles, Toyota Hilux, Jeep and one other car, all tinted with siren. It is with this they that there were able to

pass the various police patrols in the town.

"The incident happened few minutes before 12 midnight and they entered the bank with the aid of the corrosive substances strongly believed to be acid and hydrocarbon gas. They melted the protectors with the chemicals they brought and were in the process of getting access to the bank's vault when my men who were alerted moved to the scene. Of course, there was a shootout and in the process the robbers killed one of our inspectors and escaped with his rifle.

"After this, they started running round Benin and somewhere along the Sapele road, they sighted a police patrol vehicle with one mobile policeman (sergeant), constable and another civilian inside, they thought the patrol vehicle were there to chase them, so, they opened fire on the vehicle and killed the mobile policeman and one civilian that