

Bloody bank robbery:

Bandits kill Mopol Sgt, 5 others

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FADARE and MANSUR
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At least six persons, mobile policeman, Sgt. Elisha Maneh and five civilians, were feared killed yesterday when armed robbers attacked a bank in Lagos.

The Mile 12, Ketu, branch of a first-generation bank (names withheld by *Saturday Champion*) was the scene of the bloody confrontation.

In immediate fallout of the attack was the burning down of the Mile 12 police post by an angry mob said to be dissatisfied with police response to the robbery operation.

The robbers, *Saturday Champion* learnt, struck at about 11 am and operated for about 45 minutes, shooting sporadically – apparently to scare away on-lookers.

Many people were reportedly hit by stray bullets fired by the rampaging robbers and are receiving treatment at the Lagos State University Teaching Hospital (LASUTH), Ikeja.

As at press time last night, the identities of the other deceased persons could not be ascertained but *Saturday Champion* gathered that a majority of them were social miscreants, a.k.a. *area boys* who purportedly chased the gunmen after they (suspects) had successfully concluded their operation at the bank about 11 a.m yesterday and kept shooting sporadically to frighten residents of the area

and ward off possible counter-attack.

The witness said the corpse of the deceased have been deposited at LASUTH morgue.

Our witness who pleaded for anonymity said the robbers stormed the bank in two unregistered buses and immediately broke into the vaults after cordoning off all entry and exit points in the area to keep away intruders.

He said the late mobile policeman attached to the bank, confronted the robbers but succumbed to their superior fire power. He was shot on the head and he died instantly.

The robbers who were very successful in their operation were escaping when the *area boys* allegedly pursued them, apparently hoping that the robbers would abandon their loot.

They were, however, unfortunate as the suspects opened fire on them, killing and wounding several others.

The source said that one of the deceased was emerging from a dry cleaning shop where he had gone to collect his cloth when he was hit by stray bullets.

Sequel to the death of the *area boys*, their colleagues unleashed their anger on the police by setting it ablaze.

Saturday Champion learnt that police quickly drafted some Armoured personnel carriers (APCs) to the scene.

When our reporter visited the scene, residents had locked themselves inside their homes, apparently for fear of more stray

bullets.

The entire Ketu market neighbourhood was literally deserted as traders abandoned their wares for safety of their own lives.

Reacting to the development, spokesman of the Lagos State police command, Superintendent of Police, Olubode Ojajuni, confirmed the incident.

Speaking with *Rhythm FM* radio station, Ojajuni said, "there was an attempt to rob the bank and in the process two people were shot: One policeman and a civilian.

"We moved in actually to dislodge them and that area you know is a market area and we have to be very careful.

"Based on that, we were able to inflict casualty on them so they (robbers) went with their dead and wounded colleagues," Ojajuni said.

The spokesman who said 25 suspects had been arrested by the police for the torching of

the police post, also dispelled the insinuation that policemen were slow in fighting the robbers.

Said he: "That area is infested with hoodlums. They wanted to use that opportunity to loot the market and other banks around there.

The police prevented them and I believe that was what angered them and that was why they marched on the police post and attacked it," he said.

Meanwhile, Gov. Babatunde Fashola of Lagos state speaking when he visited the wounded at LASUTH Ikeja, assured that families of slain policeman would be adequately compensated and that his government would not relent in its on-going battle with armed robbers.

We shall not relent in our efforts to continue to collaborate with relevant agencies, especially the Nigerian police to contain the excesses of youths who are not ready to be engaged in legitimate job," he warned.

Community

Umuobiala Community in Isuikwuato local government area of Abia State will hold a two-day stakeholders retreat aimed at finding ways of moving the community forward.

The retreat, which is entitled "Embrace Positive Change: A way forward," is an action plan towards Umuobiala's sustainable development and will take

place between August 25 and 26 at Umuobiala civic centre complex.

According to a release signed by the retreat coordinator and secretary, Mr. Nobert Okoroegbe and Chief Stanley Nwokeukwu, respectively, the retreat is a follow up to the U.D.U national convention held in August, 2002.

The release further