

Blood bath!

Robbers kill 3 policemen, 2 others

Miss ₦50m loot

EMMA OGU, Owerri

THREE mobile policemen and two civilians were yesterday shot dead by a gang of eight robbers who attacked the Owerri, Imo State branches of second generation banks (names withheld).

Several persons including the bank staff sustained bullet wound in the raid that lasted over an hour.

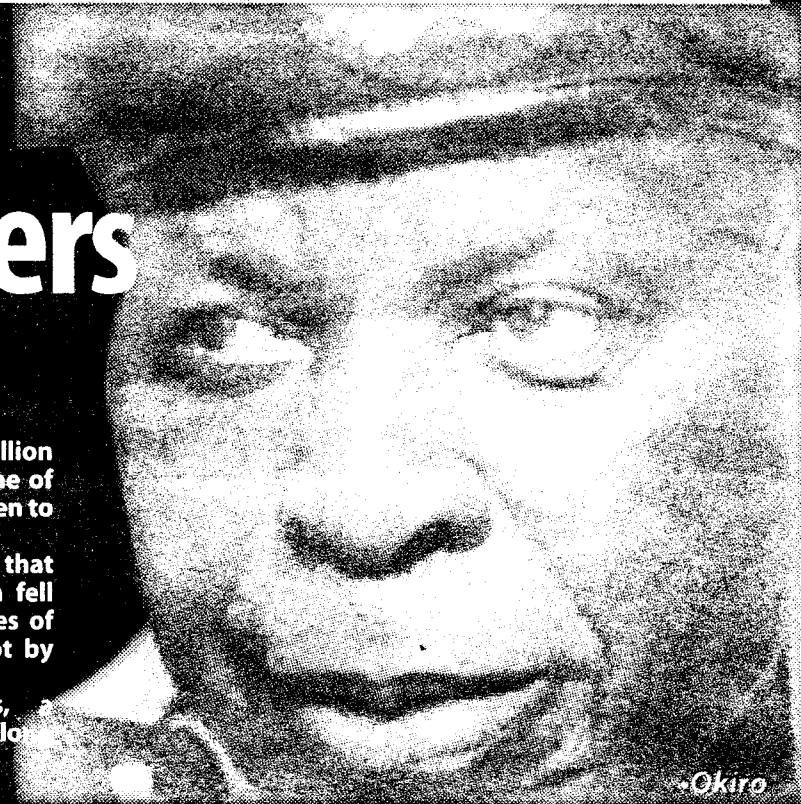
Reacting, Imo State Police Command

said the sum of N50 million targetted by the robbers in one of the banks was secured and taken to a safe vault.

Daily Champion observed that two of the mobile policemen fell into the gutter at the premises of the bank after they were shot by the robbers.

One of the civilian victims, a street trader was passing along

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Okoro

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the road when the robbers started the operation and was hit by the bullet, while the second victim identified as Uche Duru was directly shot by one of the men stationed on the road.

The robbers stormed the premises of the banks in a jeep and a Mitsubishi car about 10.15am and took positions on the ever busy Wetheral road, firing sporadically, until the road was cleared. Thereafter, some moved into the banks, while others manned the road with sustained shooting.

As the operation was going on, bullets were raining outside the premises of the two banks. The robbers aimed at the walls of the two bank as well as several other houses nearby including the law chamber of Sir Bon Nwakanma, a Senior Advocate of Nigeria (SAN). No less than eighteen cars belonging to customers of the banks parked inside the premises as well as those abandoned on the road by their occupants during the operation, had their windscreen shattered by bullets.

People watched helplessly as scores of policemen and soldiers mobilized to counter the gang but could not face the superior fire power of the robbers. Not even the police Armoured Personnel Carrier (APC) deployed some distance away could come close to the robbery scene. In the end, three policemen laid dead

alongside two civilians.

The robbers, successfully carted away unspecified sums of money from the two banks unchallenged. They reportedly escaped around 11.20am in their jeep and Mitsubishi cars through the MCC road as the major roads in the city were blocked by residents in an attempt to track them. Immediately the robbers escaped, residents converged at the premises of the two banks. There were several pellets along the road.

While the operation was going on, people abandoned their cars and took cover in nearby houses while commuters were running helter skelter for fear of stray

bullets. Many caught by the flying bullets were injured.

Social and economic activities were paralysed for hours as people locked up their shops. The nearby Mbase road, Okigwe road and Assumpta avenue housing many banks in Owerri were all deserted as panic gripped commuters and customers.

Speaking to our correspondent about 1.30pm, the Police Public Relations Officer, Mr. Linus Nwaiwu said men of the state police command were on the hot chase of the robbers and may close in on them "any moment from now".

He disagreed with our reporter that the command did not respond very well to

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correspondents and ordered security men to bar them from coming to her office.

The health committees of the Senate and House of Representatives are said to have collected N10 million apiece which was allegedly shared among some members in violation of the nation's financial regulation and fiscal responsibility rules.

While the House of Representatives committee has already returned its own share of the money, the Senate committee is yet to come out with a position on the issue that resulted in the sacking of Professor Adenike Grange, erstwhile minister of health and her minister of state,

Iyabo Obasanjo

Architect Gabriel Aduku.

The ministers and others involved are expected to be charged to court for fraud and misappropriation of public fund next week.

Senator Obasanjo-Bello, who held close door meeting with some stakeholders in preparation of the 2008 national health conference refused to talk to journalists who her for explanation over alleged involvement of her committee in the scam and instead ordered security operatives to stop them from having further access to her.

However, reacting to the development, Senator Hambagda who witnessed the drama

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the situation and said "if we did not confront them, why did they kill some of our men. As I am talking to you now, I can tell you where the robbers are and our men are on their trail. We will close in on them any moment from now."

Meanwhile, Imo State police command said that it has relocated the sum of N50 million brought into Zenith Bank Plc before the armed robbers struck to another place where it would be safe.

Mr. Nwaiwu, on Assistant Superintendent of Police (ASP) told our correspondent that a bullion van brought in the N50 million into the Bank shortly before the robbers arrived.

He said the robbers could not succeed in carting away the N50 million but only succeeded carrying the money dropped out the counter. He said the command has therefore relocated the money to undisclosed vault.

He said men of the command have recovered some vehicle used in the operation.

The executive assistant to Imo state governor on security, Mr. Law Biadua who also spoke to our correspondent after the robbery incident backed police claim that they responded on time. He said

that the policemen could not fire at the robbers because of the number of casualty that will be recorded during such exchange of fire. He said, people should learn to keep off the streets during a robbery operation to enable security operatives engage

robbers fire for fire.

He said the presence of large number of people on the streets made the policemen and soldiers not to fire back at the robbers. He said, the operatives could not also engage the men while they were inside the banks due to the number of innocent civilians including bank staff inside that may be hit by bullets.

Gunmen kidnap son of Bayelsa deputy speaker

DENNIS NAKU, Yenagoa

UNKNOWN gunmen yesterday stormed the Bayelsa State Government owned Niger Delta University, kidnapping 22-year old son of the Deputy Speaker of the State House of Assembly identified as Emomoemie on the early hours of Thursday in Amassoma in Southern Ijaw local government area, Bayelsa State.

This is coming barely 24-hours after the released of Mrs Dorothy Otele, wife of a member of the State Assembly Hon Frank Otele who was abducted by hoodlums at her Hair dressing salon at Ada George in Port Harcourt last week.

But Emomoemie, a 200 level student of Economics in the state owned Niger Delta University (NDU) is the son of Hon. Nestor Binabo, Deputy Speaker of the state Assembly.

A reliable source

informed Daily Champion that the hoodlums stormed the university situated in Amassoma, Wilberforce Island, the country home deposed governor of the state, Chief Diepreye Alamiyeseigha, heavily armed with gun and other dangerous weapon. They reportedly shot sporadically into the air to scare away other students in the same hostel.

Investigations however revealed that the undergraduate had barely retired to bed when the gunmen struck, even as attempt by some of his friends to rescue failed at once, even as other students were prevented from coming out due to the deafening sound of the gun shots.

The suspected gunmen later escaped through the Amassoma waterways which meander into the creeks of the Niger Delta.

Reacting to the incident, the Deputy Speaker said he has not received any information from the kidnappers saying