

Robbers kill 7 in Zaria

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Dare-devil armed robbers firing in many directions with sophisticated guns yesterday killed a three-year-old girl and six others when they attacked the Samaru, Zaria branch of the United Bank for Africa (UBA). Daily Trust learnt that the hoodlums, five men and a woman, may have targeted money meant for the payment of military pensioners, who were supposed to collect their money at about the time the robbers struck. Most of the people killed by the robbers, including the manager of Daula Restaurant situated two buildings away from the bank, were innocent passers-by who were in the bank's vicinity during the robbery. No staff member of the bank was killed, Daily Trust learnt.

According to one of the bank's security guards who survived the incident, the robbers arrived the bank in a Mercedes car at about 10.30am. They pretended to be bank customers. He said upon their entry into the bank premises, they began shooting sporadically. "They did that to disperse the people around. That gave them access to the banking hall. They however killed three people in the bank premises, including one policeman on guard duty, before they eventually entered the banking hall. The other two were our customers who were about entering the bank", the security man who refused to disclose his name said. He added that when the robbers entered the bank, they made all the staff and the people inside to lie down. They went straight to the bank's strong room and carted away a lot of money, he said. He said when the five robbers emerged from the bank, they could not find their car and driver where they left them - outside the bank premises. Suspecting that the driver was caught, according to an eye witness, they once again opened fire sporadically with their sophisticated AK47 guns. The robbers left the scene when the driver who changed his parking position came up with their car, leaving behind their victims writhing in pools of their blood. "The few police men around had no option than to ran away for their dear lives since their guns could not match those of the robbers. When the robbers continued shooting, they shot dead two people moving on a motor cycle." According to Umma Abdulhamid, who works in the Ahmadu Bello University's [ABU] Faculty of Education, stray bullets fired by the robbers hit a Zamfara State Transport Company bus and killed a three-year-old girl. Another bullet killed the girl's father and hit another girl of about five years. Malam Idi Bature, who lives in Unguwan Malam Sule, Kusfa, Zaria city, said he was hit by a stray bullet as he passed by the robbery scene. Daily Trust found him receiving treatment at the Ahmadu Bello University Teaching Hospital (ABUTH) Shika, Zaria. He said he is a hawker of shoes. "I was passing by when I saw people running. Before I could know what was happening I began to hear gunshots. The next thing I saw after that was blood running down my right hand. Because of the commotion, I didn't know that it was a stray bullet that hit my hand. It was after everything was over that I discovered what has happened to my hand and I was rushed here by sympathizers," Bature said. Dr Alexandra Gwamma, the consultant at the ABUTH Accident and Emergency unit confirmed the receipt of two corpses and five injured persons, including a five-year-old girl. The girl's mother was not in the hospital when Daily Trust visited. An eye witness however said the mother of the three-year-old girl that was killed left the injured girl under the care of the hospital doctors to take the corpse of the younger daughter for burial. A senior police officer at the Samaru police division told Daily Trust that two police men were killed by the robbers and a police sergeant on guard at the bank was also shot by the robbers. The sergeant is now receiving treatment at the ABUTH. Dr Joshua of the ABU Main Campus Health Services Unit & Sick Bay - said he received one dead body and four injured victims. "I am the doctor in charge of the emergency unit. The dead body I received was taken to the ABUTH in Shika and the other four persons who sustained various degrees of injury were treated and discharged," Dr Joshua said. Armed soldiers and mobile policemen are now guarding the bank premises located at the Zaria-Sokoto express way. The armed men were drafted to the scene of the incident when ABU students began demonstrations and burning of tires on the premise that the Samaru police division was supposed to have foiled the robbery. "The police division is not more than half a kilometer away from the robbery scene. These guys operated for more than thirty minutes but the police couldn't do anything. Some of our colleagues were injured and one was killed," an angry ABU student said. Dr Joshua said the person that was taken to the university's clinic who the students thought was their colleague was not actually an ABU student. "He was later identified as a passer-by, while others said he was a policeman," Joshua explained. Armed soldiers and the mobile police are also guarding the Samaru police division after the students threatened to burn it down. The soldiers and the police men were also drafted to the Zaria Police Area Command. "The robbers have carted away more than N2,000,000 according to the information we have so far received. The actual amount will be known when investigation on the incident is over," a senior police officer at the Samaru police division told Daily Trust. As at press time, no bank official was at hand for comment. The bank was under lock and key at the time of Daily Trust's visit. The Kaduna state police commissioner however confirmed the incident when he was contacted by Daily Trust.