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Eight persons, forced to lie face down on the highway as they were being robbed at gunpoint, were crushed to death by a trailer on Monday night near a village west of Maiduguri, Borno State.

he robbery victims were lying on the highway and were being frisked by a gang of armed robbers along Maiduguri-Damaturu road near Auno, a small village in Konduga Local Government Area, when the trailer approached.

Security sources said the robbers opened fire on the trailer, which roared on and drove over the robbery victims. Eleven other persons sustained different degrees of injuries and were hospitalised in Maiduguri.

The dead - three females and five males - were among passengers travelling in a Toyota bus with registration number XA51KGG when they were stopped by the robbers, who mounted a road block a few kilometres away from Auno.

The robbers asked all passengers to alight from the car and lie on the road while they snatched their cash and other belongings, survivors of the incident said.

While the passengers were laying face down in panic, the eight robbers opened fire on an oncoming trailer with registration number XA517JER as a result of which the trailer rammed into the passengers who could not move from their positions because of fear. Eight of them were killed on the spot while 11 others were wounded.

When contacted, Public Relations Officer for the Borno Police Command ASP Isa Azare confirmed the deaths and said the eight corpses were deposited at the morgue of the University of Maiduguri Teaching Hospital. He also said those who sustained injuries were moved to the Umaru Shehu Ultra Modern Hospital, Maiduguri for treatment.

The PPRO also said that men of a combined military and police anti-robbery squad known as 'Operation Flush' have arrested one of the robbery suspects.

Azare said the police were investigating the incident and would brief the press at a later time when the investigation is concluded.

Armed robbery incidents had been rife along the Maiduguri-Damaturu road particularly at a sharp bend near Auno where motorists often slow down, our correspondent said.

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