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Saturday robbery that shook Abuja

By Taiwo Adeniyi, Clement A. Oloyede, Adam Umar | Published Date Dec 29, 2019 6:16 AM



• How Staff Led Gang To Rob Bank

Where a group of suspected dare-devil armed robbers got the audacity to launch a daring daylight attack on a bank branch on a Saturday morning in the heart of the Federal Capital City, Abuja, was a thought that occupied the minds of many residents of the nation's capital yesterday.

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Even more difficult to comprehend by residents was the reality that the robbers could not have been unaware that banks in the country don't operate on Saturdays.

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Mape, the community hosting the bank that was targeted by the suspected robbers, was only a few minutes' drive from an array of military barracks, lining up a long stretch of the Murtala Mohammed expressway, otherwise known Kubwa express.

The police headquarters also sits not more than 20 minutes away.

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Two of the Mpape robbery suspects arrested by police yesterday

A sprawling urban slum atop one swelling hill in the Federal Capital Territory recently affected by a series of earth tremors, Mpape is densely populated by low-income earners and is a few kilometres to Maitama, a highbrow area.

There are over six commercial banks in the community, with First Bank, the fourth standing by the roadside as one drives into the community through the Maitama-Garui Road, off the Murtala Mohammed expressway.

There is one major road to Mpape from the Murtala Mohammed expressway. The road, a snaky slope with several potholes, is mostly plied by trucks conveying granites, sand and other building materials from the numerous quarries in the area.

The community, located in Bwari Area Council, could also lead to Kaduna and Nasarawa states through adjoining communities.

As residents were stepping out of their homes around 10am, shots rang in the air and they soon learnt that the branch of First bank in the area was being targeted by armed robbers.

Residents said as soon as the gang arrived the bank's premises, they shot at a policeman on duty, who fired back at them.

It was the said policeman that alerted his station about the exploit of the robbers, it was gathered.

But another witness gave a different account, saying the robbers disguised as customers and arrived at the bank about 10 am in a Toyota Sienna Sport Utility van.

The witness, who does not want to be mentioned, said there were two police officers at the bank and one was overpowered and tied up while his colleague escaped.

"After he escaped, the robbers tried shooting at the officer before they entered the bank. The officer returned fire at the robbers. The gun duel lasted for some minutes," the witness said.

According to him, police reinforcement arrived about 40 minutes after the first gunshot was heard.

Before long, truckloads of police reinforcements, joined by truckloads of soldiers, were making their way to scene.

At the same time, residents, in large numbers, streamed in the direction of the bank.

After the police and military arrived at the area, the robbers were held up inside the building for close to two hours.



One of the six suspected armed robbers who were trapped inside First Bank's banking hall during an operation, being arrested by the security operatives at Mpape in Abuja yesterday

When they eventually stormed it, one of the robbers got killed and three were arrested.

Daily Trust on Sunday learnt that one of the men came out of the building through the roof before surrendering to security men.

Bank staff leads the way

An unnamed staff of the bank, police said, led armed robbers into the branch of the bank at Abuja suburb.

The FCT police command said the attempted robbery was foiled, without anything taken away.

The FCT Police Commissioner, Bala Ciroma, said the attempted robbery was staged by a five-man robbery squad that gained access to the banking hall after shooting sporadically into the air.

He said police operatives on the ground barricaded them while waiting for reinforcement.

Bala Ciroma, in a statement issued by the deputy spokesperson of the command, ASP Mariam Yusuf, said he led the operation, adding that normalcy was restored in the area around 1:00 pm after four of the suspects, including the banker, were arrested.

“Police operatives were immediately deployed to the scene and engaged in a crossfire with the robbers, thereby foiling the attack on the bank with the backup of the military. Consequently, four suspects were arrested and one shot dead while trying to escape. The commissioner of police has ordered a discreet investigation into the incident.