

METRO

Friday, August 31, 2007

[HOME](#)[ABOUT US](#)[SUBSCRIBE](#)[MEMBERS](#)[CONTACT US](#)
 THE GUARDIAN

ARCHIVES

[Read Past Issues](#)

NEWS

National
Metro
Africa
World
Business

OPINION

Editorial
Columnists
Contributors
Letters
Cartoons
Discussions
Outlook

SPORTS

Home
Abroad
Golf Weekly
Results

FEATURES

Focus
Policy & Politics
Arts
Media
Science
Natural Health
Law
Education
Weekend
Friday Review
Executive Briefs
Fashion
Food & Drink
Auto Wheels
Friday Worship
Saturday Magazine
Sunday Magazine
Ibru Ecumenical
Centre
Agro Care

BUSINESS SERVICES

Property
Appointments
Money Watch
Market Report
Capital Market
Business Travels
Maritime Watch
Industry Watch
Energy Report
Insurance
Complife

The siege goes on...

By Seye Olumide, Marcel Mbamalu and Nkechi Obianigwe

YESTERDAY they struck again. Three consecutive weeks before, they had also struck in different parts of the metropolis, robbing banks and bureau de change offices, telecommunications equipment shops, filling stations and fast food outlets.

Yesterday they struck again about mid-morning, in a raid on a bank on Adesina Street, Ijeshatedo, Surulere, in the Lagos mainland carting away money from the counter cashiers and leaving a security man dead.

Eyewitness told The Guardian, it was like a scene from a Hollywood movie, which thousands of residents and traders along Adesina Road may not forget in a long, long while, when about 16 armed robbers most of them in their early 20s, attacked a branch of the bank.

"They came in a Mercedes Benz 190 car, a black Sports Utility Van (SUV, also called jeep) and a BMW car all without number plates.

"They arrived with sophisticated guns at about 10.00 a.m. They blocked the entire road before marching on the bank", one witness told The Guardian yesterday.

No sooner the robbers jumped down from their vehicles than they started shooting sporadically at the blue gate that leads into the bank premises.

One of the private security officers, an Ogoja man whose first name was given as Benedict, was killed immediately while his colleague named Baba Dike was seriously injured on both legs.

One of the mobile police officers who was around at the time of the robbery incident told The Guardian that the robbers who were dressed in suits and native attire, started shooting at the security men on duty immediately they alighted from their vehicles.


Said he: "It was such a terrible incident because the robbers came unexpected. They caught all the security guards unaware. Their target was the strong room.

"After they had killed the security man, they had access into the bank and took all the money on the counter.

"One of the bank's staff was also injured but the robbers could not get into the strong room because the accountant who is in charge of the strong room was not at his desk".

A trader whose shop is beside the bank said the safety of all the people operating businesses besides the bank was owed to the Almighty yesterday because of the careless manner the robbers were shooting.

Said he: "We were all confused at the sound of the gunshots. It was as if there was a military operation going on".



High performance. Delivered.

Welcome fresh challenges every day.

Find out more about accounting and finance careers at Accenture ►

Over 148 spent shells were removed from the grounds of the bank after the operation.

The mobile policeman explained further that the robbers could not sustain the operation for a long time because the policemen hiding in the premises engaged the robbers in a gun duel.

According to him, "immediately the robbery operation started, my colleague and I ran inside the premises to hide from where we started exchanging fire with the robbers. But because they did not know from where we were shooting, the robbers could not stay long to steal much money.

"The operation did not last more few minutes before they abandoned the operation and fled".

The officer regretted that banks do not take the issue of security very seriously the way it should be.

He said: "For two years, we have been complaining to the authorities of banks that their security posts are not safe enough. Almost all banks prefer fancy gates to secure gates. They have done nothing. This branch we are in is a good example of what a security gate should not be. See what has happened today (yesterday)".

As at 3.00 p.m. yesterday, the shock of the booming gunshots from the robbers and the police reply still lingered in the memory of people around. They feared to move freely around the vicinity.

Some people told The Guardian that the rate at which robbers were attacking banks located near residential homes in Lagos was becoming alarming.

They advised government to look critically into the issue of security of banks and the general citizenry.

Armed robbers had in late July intercepted a billion van that was conveying money to a bank on the Okota-Oke -Afa Road, Isolo.

Two policemen in the escort van were killed by the robbers during an exchange of gunfire.

Eyewitnesses later admitted that the robbers had an overwhelming superior fire power than the policemen.

Last month, a Federal Highway Patrol unit in Ikorodu arrested eight suspected armed robbers who might have been responsible for the upsurge of crime on the Ikorodu-Mile 12 highway.

The police team led by Auta Yakubu and Alao Ganiyu, responded to a distress call and intercepted a bus in which the robbers were making their escape.

Not long ago, the Shegunle and Egbe and Mafoluku areas of Lagos metropolis were invaded by gangs of armed robbers who laid seige to the areas and operated with seeming impunity for hours.

In the Shegunle incident, they shot dead a seven-year-old girl, killed two people including a driver in Mafoluku and raped three women in Egbe.

Reacting to such invasions, a retired teacher, Mr. Abimbola Ade said: "It does not speak well of the police that robbers can arrive a community and move from street to street, house to house, dispossessing people of their property and sometimes their lives.

"It means something is wrong, because the criminals do not have any fear of the police.

"It is also a serious matter that the police do not respond to distress calls by victims," he said.

But a businessman, Mike Okorode said "the growing number of armed robbery incidents should not be blamed on the police alone. He posed several questions without answering any:

"Is the police responsible for the large number of highly intelligent but unemployed youths in Lagos?

"Is the police responsible for the proliferation of guns in the society?

"Come to think of it, why is it that the criminals and armed robbers have more sophisticated weapons than the police?"

To Uchenna Anyamele, "any policeman who wants to confront robbers who are armed with far more superior weapons should have his head examined. He would be courting suicide," he said.

He urged the Police High Command to take note of the fact that attacks on banks seem to occur more on Thursdays and Fridays.

For whatever it may be worth, however, Lagosians are still laying some hope on the pledge by the Lagos State Commissioner of Police, Mr. Mohammed Abubakar, to fight crime and bring it to the barest minimum.

Reaffirming the pledge in Ikorodu during a visit to the area recently, Abubakar said it was imperative that violent crime in Lagos must be reduced in view of the state's pre-eminence in the nation's scheme of things.

Abubakar spoke when he visited steel manufacturers in Odogunyan Industrial Estate, Ikorodu during his working visit to "Area H" in Ikorodu, which had experienced a spate of violent robberies in the last one year.

He hinted on the possibility of siting a police station in the area, and promised to tighten security so as to protect the expatriate and Nigerian workers in the area.

The police boss toured one of the steel companies in the area, African Steel Mills Limited.

Speaking to The Guardian after the tour, Abubakar said that given the quality and volume of investments in the firm, and in line with its traditional responsibility of safeguarding lives and property, the police would do all it could to guarantee safety of lives and property for the expatriate and Nigerian workers in the estate.

Mr. P. K. Gupta, who is also the Chairman of Ikorodu Manufacturers Association, promised to lodge a formal written request as soon as

possible and promised financial contribution for the setting up of the police station in the area.

He further mentioned that he was simultaneously taking up the matter with the state government.

© 2003 - 2007 @ Guardian Newspapers Limited (All Rights Reserved).
Powered by dnetsystems.net dnet?