

ABOUT seven person were feared killed yesterday in Lagos when the Police engaged a gang of armed robbers in a shoot-out around Ilupeju and Anthony areas of the state.

Three of the casualties were said to be members of the robbery gang. However their bodies were reportedly taken away by their colleagues. Two civilians also reportedly died in the incident.

While some sources said the robbers had actually attacked a new generation bank where they were resisted by policemen on duty, Lagos State Police Deputy Spokesman, Mr. Frank Mbah, told The Guardian that no bank was attacked.

According to him, the Police got intelligence reports of an impending raid of financial houses around the Ilupeju area. Consequently, security was beefed up in the area.

So, when the robbers arrived, they were surprised and frustrated by the heavy presence of policemen, he said.

In the robbers' bid to escape, Mbah said, they began to shoot sporadically into the air. But on getting to Anthony 'U-turn', he added, the robbers met a group of policemen on "illegal" stop-and-search duty and opened fire on them.

It was in the ensuring gun-battle, that the casualties were recorded, he said.

Though two policemen were reportedly killed in the attack, the Lagos State Police Command said only one of two policemen wounded during the attack eventually died in hospital.

While restating the police resolve to tackle armed robbery in the state, Mbah, a Deputy Superintendent of Police (DSP) said: "We are on the trail of the robbers. We shall get them. They did not succeed in their attempt to rob financial houses in Ilupeju."

Yesterday's scenario was a replica of what happened two weeks ago at Mile 12 area of the state where a gang of robbers stormed a branch of one of the new generation banks, killing three policemen, the bank manager and a civilian.

During the attack, the Police shot dead one of the robbers but his colleagues were able to carry his body into their vehicle before fleeing the scene.

The incident, which occurred at about 12 noon caused serious pandemonium along the Ikorodu Road and Ilupeju environs.

Robbery incidents have a weekly occurrence in the past two months in Lagos.