

Robbers kill eight in Owerri banks robbery

YESTERDAY was mournful for most residents of Owerri, the Imo State capital as no fewer than eight of them were felled by the bullets of dare-devil armed robbers who stormed two banks.

Perhaps, more disheartening to the people was the ungainly way the police team, which responded to the bank's distress call was reportedly routed by the robbers.

The men of the underworld numbering about eight, *The Guardian* learnt were all kitted in army camouflage, an act which enabled them to catch the bank workers, customers and security aides napping.

This is even as the Assistant Inspector-General of Police, Zone II, Mr. Mohammed Abubakar, disclosed in Lagos that the suspects arrested in connection with a bank robbery in the state recently would soon be arraigned in a court of law.

The Owerri robbers, witnesses told *The Guardian* had arrived the bank premises around 11.30 am shooting two mobile policemen at the venue and killing another one at another bank on the other side of the road.

Both banks are located along Wetheral Road of the town.

As soon as the policemen were mowed down, reports said the robbers stated shooting sporadically. The whole area was resonating with dins of gunshots.

In the cause of the ensuing milieu, some other people were allegedly

From Charles Ogugbuaja (Owerri), Cornelius Onuoha, Yetunde Oyegbami (Lagos) and Ayoyinka Olagoke (Uyo)

gunned down.

Our source said most people who were hit by stray bullets were rushed to the Federal Medical Centre Owerri where doctors and nurses battled to save their lives.

Our source disclosed that as soon as the Imo State Police Command rolled out their Armoured Personnel Carrier (APC) there was jubilation in the town. Their messiah had come they believed. It was an error, they (the public) was soon to learn the APC was chased back to base by the robbers who launched a serious attack forcing the car to make a U-turn from the bank.

The Guardian learnt that as soon as the APC was forced back by the superior firepower of the robbers, it became a field day for them.

The robbers had a field day on the two banks and made away with unspecified amount of money and later drove away in their Sports Utility Van (SUV) and Mitsubishi bus through Relief Market of the MCC/Uratta road.

When contacted, the state image maker of the police, Mr. Linus Nwaiwu, confirmed the incidents but said the police were after the robbers.

Meanwhile, Abubakar who spoke when the Acting Managing Director, Chief Executive Officer of Wema Bank Plc, Mr. John Aboh, paid

him a courtesy visit in his office, described the arrest of the suspects as a morale booster for the police and that the suspects would face the full wrath of the law.

He (Abubakar) also said that intelligence works and interrogations had so far revealed that the gang was the brain behind some of the recent bank robberies in Lagos State.

Abubakar also described the successful intervention of the police in the robbery attack as an act of God and recalled that the APC sent to the scene of the robbery, as an emergency rescue operation, was not in good shape as at that time.

"Somehow, God was at work. Even with bad engine and bad tyres, the armoured can get to the scene to assist arresting the robbers".

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enforcement agencies but through the strengthening of the Police Force via adequate training and motivation for the personnel.

Oguntade said: "In recent times, we believed that by setting up the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) and the Independent Corrupt Practices Commission (ICPC), we could do better with crime control and prosecution.

"While I do not advocate that the EFCC and ICPC be scrapped, it is

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