

Three policemen killed in First Bank robbery in Edo

• Five intending pilgrims kidnapped in Kwara

By Francis Onoiribholo
(Benin) and **Dele Moses** (Ilorin)

THREE policemen and a civilian were killed on Thursday in a robbery at a branch of First

Bank in Ekpoma, Edo State.

Some staff and customers were also injured during the operation, which lasted for about 30 minutes.

It was learnt that seven armed men stormed the bank

in two vehicles at about 9.30 a.m. and engaged the policemen on duty in gun fire during which three police officers were killed.

A vulcanizer carrying out his lawful business beside the

bank was killed by a stray bullet.

The robbers made away with an undisclosed amount of money before the arrival of

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police reinforcement.

Police Spokesman Peter Ogboi said an investigation team has been constituted to fish out the culprits.

He, however, appealed to the public to assist the police in tracking them down by alerting the police of suspicious movement in their vicinity, especially of those engaging in a spending spree without a visible means of income.

Another tragedy had struck on Wednesday in Ilorin, where five intending Hajj pilgrims were kidnapped while awaiting airlift.

Their abductor was a driver whose taxi they boarded on returning to the Hajj camp on Western Reservoir Road from a bank where they collected their Basic Transport Allowance (BTA).

The victims are three men and two women, from Ekiti and Ifelodun Councils in Kwara State.

The taxi driver reportedly caused the five passengers to sleep off by spaying a substance on them.

He then diverted the journey towards Ogbomoso in neighbouring Oyo State.

The victims woke up beside a bush in Ogbomoso, where the driver was joined by armed men in another car – at which point they were asked to call their relatives and inform them of their kidnap.

After making the call, the victims were asked to switch off their handsets, and were driven to an unknown destination.

However, one of the male victims emerged naked on Thursday from a bush near Iwo in Osun State.

He was said to be incoherent because he was no longer mentally balanced.

Kwara State Pilgrims Welfare Board Secretary, Imam Abdulkadir, could not be reached on his mobile phone for comment.

But another senior official who pleaded anonymity confirmed the incident.

Police Spokesman Ezekiel Dabo said effort is on to rescue the remaining victims and arrest the kidnappers.