

NEWS

Gunmen kill commuter, policeman, injure another in kidnap operations on Lagos-Ibadan expressway

By Oluwatoyin Malik, Crime Editor

AFTER a temporary respite from the onslaught of kidnappers along Lagos-Ibadan expressway/Ibadan-Ijebu-Ode road, gunmen resumed 'business' on Friday killing some motorists and passengers heading towards Ibadan and abducting many others, including a former deputy vice chancellor of University of Ibadan.

The gunmen, it was said, operated at Feko, a village very close to Dominion University, where they shot at vehicles coming from Lagos towards Ibadan. One of those killed was a 40-year-old man, simply known as Mr Fatunmbi.

The body of another victim, *Sunday Tribune* learnt was recovered in the bush on Saturday, while a search was already on for the corpses of other victims.

The assailants, according to a source, had earlier attacked a farm at Aba Agbo, a community in Ogunmakin area near Ibadan, Oyo State, where they killed a policeman and injured another.

They were said to have re-

located to Feko, some hours after their unsuccessful operation at Aba Agbo.

It was learnt that Mr Fatunmbi, who was in his Toyota RAV4 with his wife and two children, died of bleeding from bullet injuries after managing to escape from the spot of attack.

Sunday Tribune gathered that the gunmen had targeted a foreigner who owned an avian farm at Aba Agbo.

A credible source informed *Sunday Tribune* that the kidnappers were at the farm about three weeks ago, but were repelled by operatives of Nigeria Security and Civil Defence Corps (NSCDC), who killed one of them.

Probably back on revenge mission, the kidnappers, said to be seven in number with AK-47 rifles, crept into the bush opposite the farm, unknown to the workers.

Five of them, it was said, invaded the farm between 11am and 12 noon, with some of them wearing army camouflage uniforms.

According to the source, the gateman who sighted them as they were approaching made an attempt to lock the gate, but had to flee when one of the kidnappers

kicked it open.

They were said to have sighted the farm manager (name withheld) and went after him, shooting and threatening him with death.

Fortunately, the manager, the source stated further, managed to escape through a cocoa farm beside the company with the assailants, who were shooting at him, in hot pursuit. He was said to have lost his three mobile phones to the kidnappers.

Two policemen on patrol who were said to have been alerted to the scene by gunshots, *Sunday Tribune* learnt, had engaged the bandits.

One of the policemen died in the shootout while the other officer had severe injuries in his hand and leg.

Disappointed at their failure to kidnap the targeted person, the kidnappers, it was said, retreated into the forest, about 25 minutes walk from where they initially went, close to Dominion University, and struck in the evening of same day.

They had targeted the road commuters and, at a point, started shooting at oncoming vehicles.

The drivers were said to have lost control, hitting one

another, after which the gunmen took passengers that were not injured or hit by gunshots into the forest.

The vehicles found in front of Dominion University, riddled with bullets, included a Mercedes Benz, a Hyundai car, a Toyota Sienna and a white commercial bus.

A family friend of the deceased shared the story of how Fatunmbi met his untimely death.

According to him, "the incident happened at about 6:30pm. Fatunmbi, his wife and two children were coming from Lagos to Ibadan. Between RCC and Dominion University, the kidnappers just came out of the bush with face uncovered and started shooting sporadically, killing many people, as I was told.

"I had just passed the spot about 10 minutes before the incident, on my way to Lagos.

"My people were in their black Toyota RAV4, and as the kidnappers started shooting when he got to the spot, he tried to dodge the bullets, but two of them penetrated the back of the wife and hit the right backside of the husband in two places.

"He managed to continue

driving after escaping from being taking captive, but he was bleeding heavily.

"He started getting weaker until he could no longer cope. He lost control and veered into the bush where the vehicle somersaulted.

"While they were in the bush, I was called by his brother-in-law. I had gotten to Ogere Remo, the former middle toll gate spot and I had to make a U-turn back to Ibadan. I called the wife and when I got to the spot, I met vehicles with their doors left open. Driver of the tow vehicle who helped us to bring out the Toyota RAV4 from the bush told me that there were many dead bodies on the ground.

"Unfortunately, we lost Fatunmbi. It was FRSC officials at Ogere who took his body first to a private hospital and later to the mortuary at General Hospital, Ishara Remo, Ogun State. Fatunmbi's clothes, wedding ring and bangle were removed at the mortuary and handed over to me.

"We couldn't tell the wife until this morning (Saturday) when the sad news was broken to her."

Narrating his own experi-

ence to some of those around him after he emerged from the bush, the farm manager said: "I heard our security man saying 'akoiwahala, akoiwahala'. He tried to lock the gate but one of them kicked it.

Two victims' dead bodies found inside bush

Another victim, identified as Sheriff, was said to be a driver who was just given a bus to handle on the day of the incident, and was working at Ojoo Motor Park in Ibadan.

He was shot on his side and leg, and had tried to escape with the bullet wounds but died in the bush not too far from Dominion University. His body was found at about 4:40pm, on Saturday.

Shortly before then, at about 3pm, another corpse was also picked from a different side of the bush.

A top military official and soldiers were also at the scene of the incident on Saturday.

Also part of the collaborating rescue teams were the Operation Burst operatives consisting of soldiers and civil defense officers, the Oluode of Ibadanland, Kehinde Ege; and the Agbekoyas.