

Robbers raid banks in Ibadan, kill seven

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THE Oyo State Police Command was thrown into a deep mourning on Thursday as armed robbers allegedly killed seven of its personnel during attacks on two commercial banks in the Agbowo area of Ibadan.

Eyewitnesses said the heavily armed gang of about 40, including women, also wounded some policemen who were racing to the scenes in two patrol jeeps.

The injured policemen are on the danger list at the University College Hospital, Ibadan.

A source said the robbers targeted the salaries of one of the higher institutions located within the vicinity, which a first generation bank was expected to pay on Thursday.

The amount stolen by the robbers could not be ascer-

tained as at press time.

It was also not clear the exact amount that was carted away from the second bank whose vault was said to have been forced open with a welding machine by the armed men.

As the police mourned their dead colleagues, owners of about 20 lock-up shops burnt during the raids counted their losses.

These incidents came barely a week after armed robbers raided some banks in the Alaba International Market, Ojo, Lagos.

The eyewitness said that during the Ibadan robberies, an Armoured Personnel Carrier mobilised to the scene was repelled four times by the gang.

One of them told our correspondent that the operations which lasted about four hours began around midnight.

He said he heard a man

believed to be the leader of the gang, saying "Don't shoot innocent persons. Remember your targets are the policemen."

The source added that the leader of the robbers was daring the policemen by telling them "Come, we are sure of the potency of what we have (weapons)."

Our correspondent, who visited the scene of one of the incidents, saw a burnt police Hilux van marked 033. It was learnt that the van caught fire when its fuel tank was hit by bullets. The fire was said to have spread to the shops.

One of the affected shop owners, Mrs. Taiwo Adebayo, put her loss and those of others at about N7m.

A Federal Highway patrol jeep, marked PF 874 HQ, said to be riddled with bullets was said to have being towed away by the police.

The walls of one of the banks and a car parked close to the building, were also destroyed.

The Public Relations Officer of the state Police Command, Mr. Olu Akinmoladun, confirmed the attacks.

He, however, told newsmen that two policemen were killed and four others sustained injuries

Akinmoladun said that when a distress call came around 1am that robbers had laid a siege to the area, the police responded immediately.

He said, "We mobilised our men from everywhere to the area and two of them ran into an ambush laid by the robbers. They (robbers) were so many and we had to move in the APC because of their firepower.

"We succeeded in chasing away the robbers with the aid of the APC."