

ICYMI: Banker drove us to Abuja bank – Robbery suspect

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The suspects Photo: Olatunji Obasa

- ‘He disabled CCTV, told us we could steal N7m’

Adelani Adepegba, Abuja

The police on Tuesday paraded three suspected robbers, who attempted to rob an old generation bank in the Mpape area of Abuja last Saturday.

An employee of the bank, Larry Ehizo, 30, was alleged to have led three others, Timothy Joe, 21; Princewill Obinna, 24; and Elijah David, 19, to the bank in an attempt to steal a huge sum of money from it.

The fourth suspect, identified simply as Patrick, was gunned down by security agents during the failed heist, while a manhunt has been launched for the fifth member of the gang, identified simply as Ernest.

Ehizo, who allegedly masterminded the robbery, was said to have also driven his gang members to the bank premises in his Peugeot 206 car and provided directions on how to access the vault.

The bank employee also allegedly gave them black fez caps to cover their faces before he disabled the close circuit television cameras on the premises.

Parading the suspects, the Commissioner of Police in charge of the Federal Capital Territory, Bala Ciroma, said efforts were being made to arrest other members of the gang, who are on the run.

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He said, “Four locally-made pistols, one Peugeot 206 car with number plate SBG 752 FP, two cutlasses, two daggers, one axe, a pair of pliers, one Infinix Note phone and one saw blade were recovered from the suspects.

“Efforts are being intensified to arrest other members of the gang, who are currently at large.”

Narrating how the failed heist was executed, David alleged that Ehizo informed the gang members that the robbery would rake in N7m and assured them that only a few staff members would be at work on the day of the incident.

David further explained that the banker administered an oath of secrecy on him before they went for the operation.

On entering the bank premises, the 19-year-old explained that they saw the policeman on duty sleeping, adding that they tied him with an old sponge and proceeded to the banking hall, where they also tied up other workers on duty.

He said, “Mr Larry (Ehizo) told us that the job could fetch about N7m. After we entered the bank, we saw a riot policeman on duty but sleeping, so Obinna pointed a pistol at him and we tied him with an old sponge. Mr Larry told us that he would keep the other door open for us.

“So, Larry and Obinna later went upstairs with a pair of pliers to disconnect the CCTV. On our way out, Larry suddenly shouted, ‘Ah, the MOPOL has escaped’; then, I ran inside and all of us scattered. I didn’t know what to do. Then the police began firing teargas into the premises.”

David further said Ehizo attempted to implicate his colleagues after they were arrested.

“I decided to untie the other bank workers because the teargas could kill them. I apologised to them. When we came out, we saw a lot of policemen and soldiers; they pointed guns at us and asked who arranged the robbery, then Mr Larry pointed at an innocent man, but I said it was Larry,” he stated.

Explaining his roles, Obinna said Ernest informed him about “a bank job” on December 24, 2019, which would be executed in collaboration with Ehizo, adding that the banker assured him and his friends that he would facilitate access to steal money from the bank.

He said, “Mr Larry told us there that there was a deal he wanted us to execute and that it would not take more than 10 to 15 minutes.

“He said the bank would not operate on Saturdays and that if we could come around, he would help us to get the money out.

“We discussed how to walk in there when the security personnel would be unavailable and other things. So, on Friday, we organised ourselves and on Saturday, we carried out the operation.”

Obinna, a photographer, added that Patrick provided the guns used for the robbery the night before the operation.

“Patrick said he would stay by the gate, because he is taller than all of us and he has power to fight,” Obinna stated.

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But Ehizo said he was blackmailed by Ernest to carry out the heist, adding that he (Ernest) threatened to deal with him and his family.

Ehizo stated, “Ernest is a customer of the bank and that is where we got to know each other, because I work in the customer service unit of the bank. There is a place I used to drink, that's where he works as a barman.

“He told me to tell the gang members how to get inside, show them where the CCTV was and that I should show them where the police officer on duty would be. When we drove into the bank, he even called me, because he was across the bank. He said I should just do as agreed and out of fear, I said yes.”