

How robbers killed Benue DPO, three cops, IG fumes

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Victim of the robbers' gunshots

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More facts emerged on Saturday on the robbery incident in Otukpo area of Benue State on Friday.

Armed robbers had raided some banks in the town and killed some people. It was learnt on Saturday that those killed included the Divisional Police Officer for Otukpo, John Adikwu, and three female police who were at the entrance of the station.

Saturday PUNCH had reported that the robbers first visited the policemen and killed some policemen before attacking the banks. The banks raided were UBA, First Bank, Zenith Bank, Access Bank and Stanbic IBTC Bank with no fewer than 12 people reportedly killed during the operation.

Reports indicated that a staff member of one of the banks was also killed. The worker, identified as Uche, was said to have concluded his National Youth Service Corps programme earlier in the year and got a job in the bank where he resumed about a week ago.

Five people were said to have been injured and currently receiving treatment.

It was gathered on Saturday that the armed robbers came in a large number and stationed themselves in a group of four at each bank.

An eyewitness who spoke to Sunday PUNCH on condition of anonymity said, "The operation appeared like what was well planned and executed. Each of the banks had four people attached to it, while one was outside, shooting indiscriminately. Three were inside, carrying out the operation."

The eyewitness stated that a group of three robbers was attached to the police station, adding, "As soon as they (robbers) came, they shot and killed the three female police officers at the entrance of the station.

"One of the robbers manned the entrance of the station shooting indiscriminately while two others went into the station where they shot the DPO."

The eyewitness explained that throughout the operation, gunshots rented the air.

Meanwhile, soldiers at the military barracks located along Otukpo/Taraku Road were said to have intercepted the robbers and killed two of them.

Unconfirmed reports also indicated that four of the fleeing robbers had been caught.

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The Police Public Relations Officer in the state, Catherine Anene, on Saturday confirmed the killing of the two robbers while trying to escape.

Anene explained that security operatives intercepted the robbers along Otukpo-Taraku road and shot two of the fleeing robbers, adding that security men were on the trail of other fleeing robbers.

Anene added, “On 20/10/2023 at about 1615hrs, armed robbers invaded Access, First, Zenith, UBA and Stanbic (IBTC) Bank Otukpo simultaneously. The Otukpo Divisional Police Officer, CSP John Adikwu, and other police teams in the area engaged them in a gun duel but were unable to prevent their attack on the banks.

“More police teams in collaboration with other security agents were deployed in Otukpo to assist in stabilising the area and prevent these robbers from escaping. The robbers who were intercepted along Otukpo-Taraku Road engaged officers in a gun duel and two of the robbers died in the process.

“Other gang members abandoned their vehicles and escaped into the forest area and are being chased by the police. The DPO, who sustained a gunshot injury on his stomach, and three other police officers have been confirmed dead at the hospital. Other persons who sustained injuries in the bank have been moved to the hospital for treatment.”

When contacted to confirm the arrest of four members of the gang, Anene said she was yet to get an update on the matter.

Meanwhile, the Inspector-General of Police, Kayode Egbetokun, has ordered the deployment of additional operational and investigative assets and resources to Otukpo, the Benue State Command, and surrounding states to assist in the swift apprehension of the other fleeing criminals responsible for the attack.

The Force Public Relations Officer, Olumuyiwa Adejobi, in a statement on Saturday said the IG also put all police commands and formations on red alert to avert further deadly attacks on institutions and innocent citizens, noting that the Otukpo attack was an early warning sign of the ember month challenges often characterised by bank robbery and other related crimes.

Adejobi added, “The Inspector-General of Police, Olukayode Egbetokun, strongly condemns the recent armed bank robbery in Otukpo, Benue State, which resulted in the tragic loss of lives of both police officers and innocent civilians.

“The IG extends his heartfelt condolences to the families and loved ones of the victims. He noted that the assailants who orchestrated this brazen act of criminality have indeed “murdered sleep”.

“In response to this grave incident, the Nigeria Police Force has initiated a comprehensive and coordinated effort to bring the perpetrators of this heinous crime to justice. We therefore call upon the public to remain calm and cooperate with the authorities by providing any information that may aid in the investigation and pursuit of the suspects.