

I mistook dead robber for customer – Victim

• Two other suspects arrested in Calabar

FROM JUDEX OKORO, CALABAR

Cross River State Police Command has arrested two robbery suspects at Ikot Effa area in Calabar metropolis just as one was killed during an exchange of gunfire.

Crime Watch Today learnt that in the last couple of weeks, there had been incessant robberies within the metropolis. A few weeks ago, the police foiled a robbery attempt at Eight Miles and killed two suspects.

The robbery, which took place at about 8pm Sunday night at 23 Ikot Effa when armed robbers attacked some provision stores and wounded some of their owners.

The gunmen numbering five, drove to the area in Audi 80 Passat car, robbed their victims of valuable items including handsets and cash.

However, as the robbery was going on, a good Samaritan phoned the Police Response Team who hurriedly raced to the scene and on sighting security operatives, the gang opened fire. The police responded and gunned down one, arrested two while two escaped. The deceased was identified as Moses.

One of the victims, Mr. Akpan Ekerette, said he mistook the robbers for customers, but when they came and asked him to bring all the money he had in the shop, he realized that they were hoodlums.

Ekerette said: "At first, I didn't know they were armed robbers because they were about

five that came. Two of them entered my shop while others stood outside and some were also in a red colour Audi car. Then the deceased robber hit me on the head with the butt of his gun and ordered me to bring the money. I directed him to my drawer and I had about N500,000 in my shop including cash from the day's sales.

"That was when I started screaming and my neighbours alerted the police who came in less than five minutes and the armed robbers started shooting, during the exchange of fire, they apprehended two of them, while others escaped."

According to him, "this is the second time they have attacked me this year, if not that the police responded on time I wonder what would have happened to me because apart from the money they took, they also packed items from my shop including, beverages of all kinds and drinks as well as other expensive items in large quantity into their vehicle before the police miraculously came to my rescue."

One of the suspects, Okon, said: "I didn't know my friend, Moses, was an armed robber. He told me to follow him and collect a debt from one of his customers and after that he would give me part of the money. So, I followed him without knowing that he had a gun.

"On getting there, we started packing things from the guy's shop, but was surprised when the deceased pulled out a gun and that was when I knew he was an armed robber. So, I didn't know. It was the devil's work. Please, they should forgive me because I won't do it



• Suspect

again," he said.

The police command's spokesman, Mr. Hogan Bassey, told *Crime Watch Today* that the force is aware of the incident and thanked the residents for collaborating with the police.

Bassey said if this collaboration is sustained, the police would definitely rid our community of these criminals, noting that these armed robbers are not invincible, but useful information can go a long way, in winning the battle against the men of the underworld.

He listed items recovered from them to include a locally-made pistol and 42 rounds of ammunition, machetes as well as other valuables including phones, electronics and household items.