

12 killed in Edo failed bank robbery

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Tony. Osauzo, Benin

No fewer than 12 persons, including a policeman, reportedly lost their lives yesterday evening when gunmen stormed Igarra, headquarters of Akoko-Edo Local Government Area of Edo State, and attempted to rob the two banks in the town, Unity Bank and Keystone Bank.

Two detainees reported to have been arrested yesterday morning for minor offences were said to be among those reportedly killed in the police station by the gunmen.

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One of the detainees was reportedly arrested for incomplete vehicle particulars. It was learnt that the gunmen had first attacked the police station, which was about 1.2 kilometres from the banks, in a bid to neutralise any threat to their mission.

In the process, they burnt the official vehicle of the area commander and killed a policeman. Three other persons near the police station were also reportedly killed.

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A youth in the community, Ofei Obende, said they tried to resist the robbers but were overpowered by their firepower, adding that the police in the banks exchange of gunfire with the robbers, which led to the death of the three unidentifiable people.

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He said another person was caught in the crossfire and could help the police in their investigations.

Confirming the incident, the palace secretary to the Otaru of Igarra, Elder Folorunsho Dania, said: "This is a serious case. Armed robbers have besieged Igarra; so many lives killed, 10 dead persons have been counted.

“The police station was set ablaze. The area commander’s new car set ablaze; close to the police station, three people were killed and in the banks too; Keystone and Unity Banks, many persons were killed and the banks raided, it is a calamity.

“In all, 10 lives have gone. They could not access the strongroom of the banks. The people that were killed in the bank were outside the bank premises.

“Four persons were killed within the bank premises, a policeman was killed in the police station, then a stone’s throw from the police station, three persons were killed. Igarra is a war scene.”

A similar attack in November 2015 led to the death of six persons when armed robbers stormed the community.

As at the time of this report, spokesman for the Edo State Police Command, Chidi Nwabuzor, said information about the attack was still sketchy and he would release more details later.

The latest robbery in Igarra was almost exactly like the one on April 5, 2018, when armed robbers raided banks in Offa, Kwara State, killing more than 20 persons, including nine policemen, and injuring several others.

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The bandits had earlier stormed a police station, subdued the personnel, carted away arms and ammunition, before proceeding to the banks.

The robbers went berserk, killing at random, before forcing their way into the banks