

SOUTH WEST VOICE

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By Dayo Johnson

AKURE—IN the space of six weeks, dare-devil armed robbers went on the rampage killing three policemen, two civilians, injuring eight others during three deadly robbery attacks on commercial banks' bullion vans in three senatorial districts in Ondo state.

The three commercial banks' robbery attack took place in Emure-Ile in Owo council area.

The ugly occurrences had instilled fears in the minds of residents and bank officials across the state.

Bank managers, who spoke with Vanguard in confidence expressed concern and lamented that the security architecture in the state had collapsed.

Recall that these attacks are coming barely two weeks after three persons including a journalist, Olubunmi Afuye, a policeman and motorcyclists, were shot dead during a bank robbery at Ilara Mokin, in Ifedore council area of the state.

Afuye, employed less than a month at the Elizade University as the institution's spokesman had his life abruptly terminated.

However, the bandits seemed to have changed tactics after the Ilara bank robbery as they have now graduated to attacking bullion vans belonging to commercial banks in transit across the state.

These developments have heightened anxiety across the 18 council areas of the state as security agencies and commercial banks are not sure the next target of the bandits.

3 policemen shot in Ondo foiled bullion van attack

The first attack of the bullion van was recorded on July 29. In a commando-like operation, the dare-devils, during the attack in Ondo city, shoot three policemen.

The operation failed because the security personnel attached to the bullion van repelled the attack and after several exchanges of gunshots, the robbers fled.

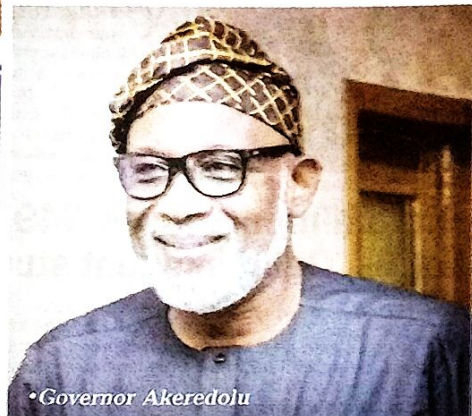
The bullion van, according to sources, was returning to Akure from Ondo town when the attack took place.

While the driver attempted to escape from the scene, the robbers pursued the van shooting at it until the driver drove to a safe place. The robbers later escaped through Ile-Oluji town.

Three other policemen escorting the bullion van to Akure sustained gunshot injuries



• Pictures of the attacked bullion van in Ondo



• Governor Akeredolu

Bullion van attacks: How bandits killed 5, injured 8 in Ondo

- Millions of naira robbed during attacks
- We'll put an end to the attacks —Police
- Attacks worrisome, embarrassing —APC/ PDP
- Involve Military — Security expert
- Proactive measures in place, says Ondo govt
- We're ready to guarantee peoples' safety— Ondo Amotekun

Robbers shoot policeman in Emure-Ile

Less than a month after the Ondo bullion van attack, the bandits again struck at Emure-Ile junction, in Owo area of the state shooting a policeman during another attack.

But this time, the bandits miscalculated as the bullion van they attacked had earlier offloaded the cash before the attack.

They reportedly went berserk by shooting sporadically after blowing open the door of the bullion van and discovered that it was empty.

One of the policemen attached to the bullion was reportedly hit by a stray bullet during the attack.

2 policemen, driver killed during Ore bullion van attack

Again, in less than a week, the bandits struck in Ore, a commercial town in Odigbo council area of the state.

The Ore attack seemed to be the deadliest as two policemen and one civilian were shot dead by the rampaging bandits.

Two other policemen were injured in the robbery attack.

An unspecified amount of money was carted away by the five bandits who forced the bullion van open after the attack at Costain area of the

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commercial town.

The bandits attacked the bullion van which was conveying money from Benin, Edo State to Araromi Obu area of the state.

Similarly, the driver of the bullion van was shot dead alongside the two policemen as the bandits fired several gunshots to demobilise the vehicle.

For hours, tension gripped the commercial town following sporadic gunshots by the bandits.

Both business and commercial activities were completely paralysed as the streets were deserted while school children scammed for safety.

Involve the military, security expert tells banks

A security expert, Dr Rahman

Abubakri, who expressed worry over the series of attacks, has asked financial institutions in the state to involve the military in accompanying bullion vans conveying money to various banks across the state.

Abubakri said the rate of violence attacked launched by bandits against policemen accompanying bullion vans in the last one month calls for urgent concern.

He said: "The bandits are really targeting the police escorts and I want to suggest that military should be part of security personnel attached to banks and that would further help scare the bandits away."

Dev't is embarrassing, worrisome —Ondo PDP

Reacting to the attacks, the Publicity Secretary of the Peoples Democratic Party, PDP, in Ondo State, Kennedy Peretei said: "It has become really embarrassing and worrisome for bullion vans to be attacked so incessantly in the state. It is proof that the security agencies are not doing enough in the area of intelligence gathering giving advantage to these bandits.

"The entire security architecture is too laid back. There is the urgent need for inter agencies collaboration to flush out these criminal

elements before it completely gets out of hand."

We're disturbed —Ondo APC

On its part, the All Progressives Congress, APC, speaking through its Publicity Secretary, Alex Kalejaye said: "The party feels deeply disturbed by the incessant attacks on bank bullion vans and, in the process, wasting human lives.

"It is dangerous. Our party shares the State government's commitment to the overall wellbeing of the people, which makes the security of lives, genuine businesses not negotiable.

"The unusual attacks also send discouraging signals to the outside world and create an erroneous impression about the true position of the situation in the Sunshine State.

"So the state would approach the trend with all the seriousness it deserves to put an end to it. Those behind and benefiting from the callous enterprise should be reminded that Ondo State would not be used as a testing ground."

We'll put an end to attacks, Police assures

When contacted, the state command spokesperson,

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Bullion van attacks:

How bandits killed 5, injured 8 in Ondo

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Funmilayo Odunlami said that security agencies are working assiduously to put an end to the attacks.

Odunlami said: "We've put in place security measures to keep criminals out of the state, we've also intensified our patrol across the state."

She urged "Community leaders

and residents of the state to join hands with the security agencies to fight crimes by reporting any suspicious character or movement in their area."

Proactive measures in place —Ondo govt

Speaking with *Vanguard*, the Special Adviser to the governor on security, Alhaji Jimoh Dojumo described the development as worrisome.

Dojumo said: "We have put in place proactive measures to prevent future occurrence. We've held series of security meetings on the attacks.

"Governor Rotimi Akeredolu is not happy about the ugly development and has given marching orders that the perpetrators be fished out and made to face the law.

"I want to assure the people of

the state that we are on top of the situation and it would not happen again."

We're ready to guarantee peoples' safety —Amotekun

Also reacting to the incessant attacks, the state commander of Amotekun, Chief Adetunji Adeleye said that the security outfit recently met with the banks' management and offered to assist them in the safety of their banking premises and cash in transit but only a few responded.

Adeleye said: "The security in the state has made it almost impossible for kidnappers and robbers to operate. Even if they do the cashless policy do not allow people to carry a lot of money around, I think that's why the criminals have shifted to attacking bullion van."

on (08033509763)

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(Photo)
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