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I Lost 3 Children To Niger Airstrike – Injured Father



Some of the victims of the airstrike

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A 50-year-old victim of an airstrike on Guradnayi village near Kusu community in Galadima-Kogo District of Shiroro LGA, Niger State, Victor Solomon, said he lost three of his children in the incident.

At least 13 civilians, mostly children, were reportedly killed in the aerial assault on Guradnayi, one of the terrorised villages in the LGA.

Residents said the incident occurred in the early hours of Sunday as aerial forces pursued bandits riding on motorcycles through the village.

Pictures of the incident were too gory to be published.

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However, the Defence Headquarters denied reports that civilians were killed in the airstrikes.

The Director of Defence Media Operations, Major General Michael Onoja, in a statement on Sunday, said the operation was conducted following intelligence reports indicating the convergence of armed bandits in Shiroro LGA on May 9, 2026.

Onoja said the strikes targeted terrorist enclaves and achieved their objectives, neutralising about 70 armed bandits in Kusu alone.

Victims recount incident

Solomon said he was asleep around 5 am on Sunday when the airstrike occurred, leaving

him with severe facial injuries.

Speaking with *Daily Trust* from his hospital bed, Victor Solomon, who expressed doubts about surviving the incident, said he lost three of his children.

“I don’t know if I can survive this. I sustained severe injuries to my face. I am in pain. We need help from the government,” he said in a low voice.

Also speaking with *Daily Trust* on the telephone, Gideon Bamaiyi said bandits had earlier passed through their usual route in the area before the airstrike occurred.

He said 13 people, including seven children who were taking shelter in his elder brother’s house, were killed in the airstrike.

He added that six others were receiving treatment at a private hospital in Zumba, Shiroro LGA.

As of 6 pm on Sunday, Bamaiyi said five of the victims, including a little girl, were still unconscious in their hospital beds.

He said the hospital had demanded N400,000 for surgery on one of the female victims, and appealed for assistance for the affected families.

“Bandits had earlier passed through their usual route, and we had all fled. So, after they passed, some people returned home. The airstrike occurred around 5 am when people were still sleeping.

“In my elder brother’s house, 13 people lost their lives, including children, because one of the bombs landed on the house. Nobody survived.

“My elder brother had already left the house when the incident happened; otherwise, he would have been a victim too.

“Currently, we have six people, including three women, a little girl, a little boy and a man, critically injured. In fact, five of them are still unconscious,” he said.

Auta Awododo, a resident of Kusu, told Premium Times that one of those killed was his cousin’s son.

He said terrorists may have been killed in the airstrikes, but innocent civilians also lost their lives.

“The military first dropped a bomb near the river in Kusu. The second bomb was dropped in Guradnaye,” another resident, who did not want to be named, said.

“Even though terrorists were killed in the assault, the operation did not deter them from their mission,” a security source told Premium Times.

“As I speak to you now, they (terrorists) are operating in Kabula near Kuchi. There is no confirmed report of abduction or killings yet, but they have rustled many cattle from several communities in Munya,” the source, a member of a local vigilante group, added.

A senior government official, who preferred anonymity because he was not authorised to speak, confirmed the airstrike but did not provide details of the civilian casualties.

He also confirmed the movement of bandits in the area, which led to the airstrike.

Many residents have been killed in accidental airstrikes across communities in Shiroro. In 2022, a Nigerian Air Force fighter jet killed six minors in Kurebe village, according to a Premium Times investigation.

Five months later, another military airstrike killed eight civilians in the same village.

Military denies civilian deaths, says 70 bandits killed

The Director of Defence Media Operations, Major General Michael Onoja, denied civilian casualties in the airstrikes.

Onoja said the Nigerian Army UAV Command subsequently carried out multiple air interdiction strikes across suspected bandit hideouts in Katerma, Bokko, Kusu and Kuduru villages.

He disclosed that about 70 bandits were killed in Kusu alone, while surviving fighters were seen evacuating the bodies of their colleagues for burial.

Onoja said local intelligence sources confirmed that the aerial bombardments were “precise on target” in Kusu, Katerma and Bokko villages.

The statement said, “In line with the AFN mandate to conduct operations to rout out all forms of insecurity in the country, on 9 May 2026, intelligence reports indicated the convergence of armed bandits at Lukope Village in Shiroro LGA.

“Subsequently, on the 10 May 2026 between the hours of 1159pm to 6am, the Nigerian Army UAV Command acting on intelligence conducted multiple air strikes on different bandits locations including Katerma, Bokko, Kusu and Kuduru Villages all in Shiroro LGA of Niger State.

“Further reports from local sources confirmed that the aerial interdiction was precise on target at Kusasu, Katerma and Bokko. See video footage. It was gathered that about 70 bandits were hit and killed in Kusasu.”

He added that over 200 armed bandits on motorcycles were sighted moving towards Zango, while another group from Bokko was reportedly advancing in the same direction, allegedly to regroup for possible attacks on Sarkin Pawa, Kuchi or government security facilities.

According to him, another group was also seen converging at Kopa, east of Mongoro, indicating a possible threat to security formations in the area.

“The military took necessary steps to neutralise all these threats in a timely manner,” the statement said.

Onoja maintained that the strikes were based on credible and actionable intelligence confirming the presence of terrorists at the targeted locations.

He added that residents of affected communities had relocated to Sarkin Pawa before the operation commenced.

The DHQ said post-strike intelligence indicated that movements recorded after the operation were those of fleeing criminals rather than civilians.

However, Onoja said relevant formations had been directed to verify allegations of civilian casualties, if any, urging the media and public to avoid spreading unverified reports capable of undermining military operations and troop morale.

The Niger State Commissioner for Homeland Security, Mr Maurice Magaji, also said: “Before the military operation began, we warned civilians to evacuate, which they did. The only people left were the terrorists and their informants, and the informants are also terrorists. Anybody who was there must have been an informant.

“You know how these terrorists operate. Their strategy is to divide themselves and attack communities. We ensured that they were targeted.

“We are still monitoring the situation. The people have been very helpful,” Magaji said.

Accidental airstrikes on civilians

Nigeria has recorded several incidents of accidental airstrikes on civilians during military operations over the years, resulting in significant loss of lives.

On March 16, 2014, a misfired airstrike targeting terrorists in Kayamla village, Borno State, killed at least 10 civilians.

On January 17, 2017, more than 100 people died in Rann, Borno State, after a military jet mistakenly bombed an IDP camp and Red Cross aid workers distributing food.

In December 2017, at least 35 people were killed and about 3,000 homes destroyed when Shafaron and Nvi communities in Adamawa State were mistakenly struck by the Nigerian Air Force (NAF).

Another erroneous strike in Daglun community, Borno State, killed 20 civilians in February 2018.

In April 2019, six children were killed and 17 others injured in Tangaram and Ajia villages, Zamfara State, after a raid targeting bandits hit civilian areas.

Similar incidents occurred in Gajigana and Mainok communities in Borno State between 2019 and 2021.

In April 2020, 17 people, mostly women and children, were killed in Sakotoku, Borno State. In June 2021, civilians, including wedding guests, were hit in Gengu and Argida communities in Niger State.

Other incidents include the killing of fishermen near Lake Chad in 2021, 64 civilians in Zamfara in 2022, over 40 herders in Nasarawa in 2023, about 120 in Tudun Biri, Kaduna State, in December 2023, and multiple civilian deaths in Sokoto and Zamfara between 2024 and 2025.