

Troops neutralise 38 ISWAP fighters, recover seven rifles in Borno

By : Bertram Nwannekanma, Njadvara Musa

Date: 30 March 2026 4:44am WAT

Share :



Lt Gen. Olufemi Oluyede

Troops of the Sector 2, [North-East Joint Task Force](#), under [Operation Hadin Kai \(OPHK\)](#), have neutralised 38 terrorists of the Islamic State West Africa Province (ISWAP) in the Garin Mallum-Garin Gajere axis of the Timbuktu triangle of the Sambisa Forest in Borno State.

In a statement, yesterday, the OPHK Media Information Officer, Lt.-Col. Sani Uba, stated: “Troops on March 28, 2026, decisively defeated a half-hearted attack by [ISWAP terrorists](#) on the Mandaragirau Army Base of Sector 2.

He added that the ground troops engaged the insurgents with well-coordinated and deliberate offensive and defensive responses that forced them into a disorderly withdrawal, while the Air Component of Operation Hadin Kai provided close air support to the troops with Intelligence Surveillance Reconnaissance (ISR) feedbacks to enhance targeted kinetic responses.

Uba further revealed that subsequent exploitation along the terrorists’ withdrawal routes inflicted additional heavy losses to the ISWAP terror group.

Consequently, he stated that a total of about 38 terrorists were neutralised with eight other bodies recovered within the immediate engagement area of Mandaragirau.

Some of the locals from the community, sited along the Damboa-Biu Road, confirmed to the troops that over 30 additional terrorists’ bodies and weapons were along Garin Mallum–Garin Gajere axis of the Timbuktu triangle of forest.

“This was evidenced by blood trails and abandoned fighting weapons and equipment of the fleeing terrorists into the forest,” said Uba.

He further revealed that the troops also recovered weapons, including seven AK-47 rifles, eight magazines, four Rapid Propelled Grenades (RPGs) bombs and assorted ammunition, while recording no fatalities.

Uba noted that one MRAP was hit by a RPG fire, with the injured personnel promptly stabilised in the frontline of operation.

Regarding the outcome the operation, the information officer stated: “The scale of enemy losses has triggered widespread jubilation among the local communities and underscores the sustained dominance of OPHK troops in denying terrorists the freedom of action in the state.

He explained that additional exploitation operations are ongoing in the Garin Mallum-Garin Gajere axis on the fringes of Sambisa Forest to recover the littered terrorists' dead bodies and consolidate troops' gains.

However, the Military High Command in Abuja has commended the troops for their gallantry and resilience, urging them to sustain the operational tempo in protecting lives and property in North-East.

MEANWHILE, the Human Rights Writers Association of Nigeria (HURIWA) has condemned recent remarks attributed to the Chief of Defence Staff, Gen. Olufemi Oluyede, in which he reportedly likened the possibility of rehabilitating terrorists to the Biblical parable of the prodigal son.

Related News

- Insurgency: We risk losing Borno, North-East to terrorists, Ndume warns
- Zulum pledges to secure border communities with Cameroon, others
- Zulum pledges more jobs, vocational training for Borno youths

The group described the analogy as deeply offensive, intellectually flawed and a troubling reflection of what it called a crisis of leadership within Nigeria's armed forces.

In a statement by its National Coordinator, Emmanuel Onwubiko, in Abuja, the rights advocacy group said the comparison of members of Boko Haram and ISWAP to the prodigal son in the Holy Bible is not only inappropriate but amounts to a dangerous moral equivalence that diminishes the gravity of the atrocities committed by these terror groups.

HURIWA said that the prodigal son narrative is rooted in repentance after moral failing within a family setting, not the systematic slaughter of innocent civilians, mass abductions, bombings and acts that clearly constitute crimes against humanity.

The group maintained that such a statement from the nation's highest-ranking military officer sends the wrong signal at a time when Nigerians expect decisive, disciplined and uncompromising action against terrorism. It described the analogy as cowardly and symptomatic of what it alleged to be years of institutional decay within the military establishment, including persistent allegations of procurement corruption, diversion of funds meant for weapons acquisition and inadequate investment in troop welfare and training.

HURIWA said that rather than projecting strength and resolve, the remarks suggest a military leadership that is struggling to confront the realities of asymmetric warfare and is resorting to rhetoric that could be interpreted as providing a soft landing for individuals responsible for widespread bloodshed. The association stressed that the Nigerian state has a primary obligation under both domestic and international law to protect citizens and ensure that perpetrators of heinous crimes are held accountable.

According to the group, the invocation of a Biblical parable in this context is particularly insensitive to millions of Christians who do not associate their faith with violence, extremism or jihadist ideology. It said that drawing such parallels risks trivialising both religious teachings and the suffering of victims, while also raising concerns about the appropriateness of religious analogies in matters of national security policy.

HURIWA further stated that the comments amount to an affront to the memory of countless Nigerians who have lost their lives to terrorist attacks across the country, including recent victims of bombings and insurgent violence in the North-East. It noted that for families still grieving loved ones killed in such attacks, any suggestion that perpetrators deserve leniency or symbolic comparison to figures of redemption is not only insensitive but amounts to what it described as "dancing on the graves of victims."

The group, therefore, called on Oluyede to tender an unreserved public apology to Nigerians, particularly to victims of terrorism and members of the Christian faith who may find the analogy offensive. It insisted that leadership at the highest level of the armed forces must reflect clarity of purpose, discipline in communication and an unwavering commitment to justice.

Meanwhile, the Defence Headquarters has said that Oluyede was grossly misquoted in his remarks and stand on re-radicalising repentant and profiled former terrorists at the Operation Safe Corridor.

A statement to that effect, signed by Maj.-Gen. Samaila Uba, Spokesperson to the Defence Headquarters, said that Oluyede's speech at the Operation Safe Corridor was not in any way aimed at favouring repentant terrorists at the expense of the victims of their untoward acts, adding that re-radicalisation was a means to weaken terrorists' activities globally.

He said that purveyors of the evil news carefully avoided the substance of the General's speech and hooked on re-radicalisation of repentant terrorists.