

Gunmen kill 13, injure many in Plateau community

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•We no longer trust govt to protect us — Indigenous group •Military raids illegal arms factories, recovers weapons

STILL reeling from Wednesday's attack on mourners, terrorists again struck in Plateau State on Friday morning, attacking Ngbra Zongo community in Kwall District of Bassa Local Government Area and killing 13 people, while many others sustained injuries.

This came as troops of Operation Enduring Peace busted two illegal arms manufacturing factories, arrested suspects and recovered a cache of weapons in the state.

Saturday Tribune gathered that the gunmen, who stormed the community in large numbers in the early hours of Friday, shot sporadically and moved from house to house attacking residents who were still asleep.

A resident of the community, Thomas Angidi, who claimed to have escaped into the bush during the attack, alleged that the attackers spoke Fulfulde and killed the victims in their homes before using machetes to confirm they were dead.

According to him, several others sustained gunshot wounds and machete injuries and are currently receiving treatment at a nearby hospital, while the whereabouts of some residents who fled into the bush remain unknown.

“They came into the community around midnight and started shooting and hacking people to death. They moved from one house to another, attacking innocent people.

At the end, 13 people were killed and many injured, while the whereabouts of those who fled into the bush are unknown,” he said.

The General Secretary of the Plateau State Indigenous Development Association (PIDAN), Mr Danjuma Auta, who confirmed the incident, lamented that communities in the state no longer trust the government to protect them.

According to him, attacks had become frequent across several parts of the state, with killings and destruction of property occurring almost daily.

“It has gotten to a stage that we are no longer trusting the government; they have failed to protect us. Most of these incidents are happening under their nose and very close to them.

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“It is not just in Irigwe land alone; this has happened in Bokkos, Barkin Ladi, Mangu, Riyom and other places,” he said.

Auta alleged that the attacks were being carried out by armed Fulani herders, adding that residents knew some of the attackers by name.

“We know who the attackers are. Anywhere this thing is happening, we have the

common denominator: it is the Fulani. They are hunting us; we have become like animals to them.

“So, a time may come when people will also go after them. If it gets to that level, I don’t know how the government is going to control the situation.

“I am begging the government to arise and do something about this. We are law-abiding and patient people, but we are being taken for granted,” he lamented.

Efforts to reach the spokesman of the state police command, SP Alfred Alabo, for comments on the latest attack were unsuccessful as of the time of filing this report.

Meanwhile, troops of Operation Enduring Peace have uncovered two illegal arms manufacturing factories in Vom, Jos South Local Government Area of Plateau State, arrested suspects and recovered a cache of arms and ammunition.

In a statement signed by the Media Information Officer of the Joint Task Force, Operation Enduring Peace, Captain Chinonso Polycarb Oteh, the operation followed intelligence gathering and strategic surveillance aimed at disrupting the supply chain of illicit weapons within the task force’s area of operation.

According to the statement, troops arrested five suspects allegedly caught fabricating weapons during the operation.

A search of the sites reportedly led to the recovery of nine fabricated AK-47 rifles, one locally fabricated pistol, four empty AK-47 magazines, seven skeletal AK-47 rifles and 10 rifle butts.

Other items recovered included 36 empty shells of 7.62mm special ammunition, four revolver engines, 14 recoiling springs, six hand drilling machines, nine filing machines, four welding machines and other industrial equipment.

The statement added that the suspects and recovered items were in custody for further

investigation, while troops had intensified covert operations aimed at recovering additional arms and ammunition already in circulation.