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Bandits kill two officers as police rescue nine Kaduna farmers

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FILE: Bandits

By Godwin Isenyo

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Two police officers have been killed by suspected bandits after a successful operation that led to the rescue of nine kidnap victims in Birnin Gwari Local Government Area of Kaduna State.

The state police command said the officers were ambushed and fatally shot while returning from the rescue mission on Wednesday.

The command's spokesman, DSP Mansir Hassan, disclosed this in a statement issued on Thursday.

According to the statement, security operatives foiled a kidnapping attempt after receiving intelligence that about 15 bandits, wielding sophisticated weapons, had abducted several farmers at Unguwan Sa'idu village, a few kilometres from Birnin Gwari town.

Hassan said the Area Commander, Birnin Gwari, and the Divisional Police Officer immediately mobilised patrol teams, including personnel of the Police Mobile Force and the Kaduna Vigilante Service, to the area.

He said the operatives engaged the bandits in a fierce gun duel upon arrival, forcing them to abandon their captives and flee into the bush.

The statement read, "On arrival, the operatives sighted the bandits and engaged them. As a result, the bandits started fleeing on motorcycles into the bush because of superior firepower.

"The team launched a hot pursuit, forcing the criminals to abandon their captives and flee for safety."

The police spokesman said nine victims were rescued during the operation.

He gave the names of the rescued victims as Hudu Rabi, 31 years, Yusuf Sagir, 20, Sagir Rabi, 17, Muhammad Kabir, 23, and Kabir Lawal, 20.

Others are Idris Abubakar, 17, Mustapha Zayyanu, 18, Kabiru Rabi, 18 and Usman Lawal, 18 years.

According to the command, the victims were found tied with ropes and abandoned by their abductors before they were rescued unharmed and reunited with their families.

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Tragedy, however, struck on the return journey as suspected bandits launched an ambush on the security team.

“Regrettably, while returning from the successful operation, two police officers were ambushed by suspected bandits who had lain in wait along the route.

“The officers sustained gunshot wounds and sadly paid the supreme price in the line of duty,” the statement added.

Reacting to the development, the Commissioner of Police, Kaduna State command, Rabi'u Muhammad, commiserated with the families, friends and colleagues of the deceased officers.

The commissioner described the slain officers as heroes who paid the ultimate sacrifice in the service of the nation.

“Their sacrifice is a testament to the courage, dedication and selflessness of officers who risk their lives daily to protect the public. The command honours their memory and service to the nation,” he said.

Muhammad also assured residents that efforts were underway to apprehend those responsible for the attack.

The command said investigations and tactical operations had been intensified to track down the perpetrators and bring them to justice.

The PUNCH reports that Birnin Gwari, one of the largest local government areas in Kaduna State, has for more than a decade remained a major hotspot for banditry, cattle rustling and mass abductions.

The vast forests surrounding the area have served as hideouts for armed groups operating across parts of Kaduna, Niger, Katsina and Zamfara states.

Despite sustained military offensives, aerial bombardments and joint security operations, criminal gangs continue to launch attacks in parts of the council and neighbouring local government areas.

The latest incident comes barely days after concerns were renewed over persistent attacks on rural communities in the state, highlighting the dangers faced by security personnel engaged in counter-banditry operations and the continuing threat posed by armed groups in the North-West.