

Army Deals Blow to Bandits in Sokoto, Zamfara, Neutralises Armed Criminals

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.Sokoto police nab notorious “Sai Malam” cult leader, serial rapist, vow to keep state safe

Onuminya Innocent in Sokoto

The Nigerian Army's 8 Division Garrison in Sokoto has scored a major victory in the fight against banditry, neutralising five armed criminals and recovering

weapons and motorcycles in coordinated operations across Sokoto and Zamfara states.

Also, the Sokoto State Police Command has arrested the leader of the notorious “Sai Malam” cult group, Muhammed Muktar, also known as “Sai Malam”, and a serial rapist, Anas Sani, who preyed on young girls in the state.

According to a credible source, the victory against bandits followed a meticulously planned operation kicked off at first light on Thursday targeting notorious hideouts spanning Sokoto and Zamfara states.

The coordinated assaults hit known bandits’ enclaves in Gangara, Makawana, Satiru, Baici, and Kurkusu villages within Isa Local Government Area of Sokoto State, and Batamna village in Shinkafi LGA of Zamfara State.

The swift advance disrupted the criminal networks, forcing many to flee as the military asserted control over the troubled terrain. In Batamna village, the troops encountered heavy resistance, but in a fierce exchange of fire, they neutralised five bandits and recovered weapons, motorcycles, and Baofeng radios used by the bandits to carry out their nefarious activities.

This operation is part of the ongoing efforts to dismantle bandit networks and restore security in the region. The troops have been intensifying their efforts to combat banditry, and recent successes include the neutralisation of notorious bandits’ kingpin, and Kachalla Na’Allah, in Sabon Birnin and Isa local government areas of Sokoto State.

The Special Adviser to Governor Ahmad Aliyu on Security Matters, retired Col. Ahmad Usman, has commended the Nigerian Army and other security operatives for their significant success against banditry in the state.

“This is a significant breakthrough, and we will continue to support our security agencies as they work to restore peace and security in our state,” he said.

The people of Sokoto and Zamfara states have welcomed the operation, and are calling for more efforts to address the security challenges facing the region. The Nigerian Army has reassured the public of its commitment to protecting lives and property, and urged citizens to remain vigilant and report any suspicious activities to the authorities.

In another development, Commissioner of Police Ahmed Musa, while addressing a press conference at the Command Headquarters in Sokoto, revealed that Muktar was arrested at his residence, which doubled as a shrine, following a massive manhunt for the remaining members of the gang.

He explained that a search of Muktar's residence led to the recovery of a live python snake used for ritual purposes, banners with the inscription "Sai Malam", and various fetish materials and charms.

"This arrest is a significant breakthrough in our effort to completely dismantle this dangerous group," Musa said. "Let me reassure the good people of Sokoto State that the Command remains ready and unwavering in its commitment to neutralising all criminal networks threatening the peace of our communities."

Musa revealed that Anas Sani, a serial rapist, was arrested for conspiracy, abduction, intimidation, impersonation, and rape.

He said that Sani, who operated from Gidan Igwai Area in Sokoto, confessed to engaging in these criminal activities in collaboration with Nafiu Muhammed, Adam Nura, alias Willy, and Mubarak Yusuf, who is currently at large.

The suspects used the cover of the Peace Corps organisation to lure unsuspecting young girls into their office, where they intimidated and forcefully had carnal knowledge of them. They also video-recorded the acts and used the footage to blackmail the victims into further sexual abuse.

He stated that so far, 28 victims have been identified, and a camouflage uniform and identity card of the Sokoto State Master Peace Brigade bearing the name Sani have been recovered.

Musa warned citizens to be vigilant during the festive season, advising them to secure their homes, verify identities, and report suspicious activities.

“Criminals often seek to exploit periods of increased travel, social gatherings, and celebration,” he said. “We urge parents and guardians to monitor the movements and associations of their young adults and teenagers, ensuring they are not lured into unsafe spaces or by individuals with dubious intentions.”

The police command reassured the public of its commitment to protecting lives and property and urged citizens to remain law-abiding and provide useful information to the police.

“Together, we will make Sokoto State safer for all,” Musa said.