

B/Haram, others ambush soldiers; attack 4 states in 6 hours

From Hassan Ibrahim (Maiduguri), Abubakar Akote (Minna), Tijjani Ibrahim (Katsina), Ado A. Musa (Jos) & Abubakar S. Isah (Abuja)

Terrorists and bandits ambushed troops and attacked civilians in Borno, Niger, Plateau and Katsina states between Sunday night and the wee hours of Monday, killing many and abducting others.

They also attacked a village in the Federal Capital Territory (FCT) where they killed a seven-year-old and abducted nine residents.

Security experts last night described the development as "embarrassing" and called for a new roadmap on how to tackle miscreants in the society.

They also said it was "a source of worry" the way our military operatives were being attacked.

Borno's ambush

In Borno, members of the outlawed Boko Haram in the early hours of yesterday ambushed a convoy of military troops and the Civilian Joint Task Force (CJTF) in Gubio Local Government Area.

Although there was no official casualty figure, the Chairman of the CJTF, Alhaji Bukar Mandama, and four other members of the group were killed in the ambush.

Considering their knowledge of the terrain and contacts, CJTF members have been assisting Nigerian troops, especially in Borno for over a decade.

It could not be ascertained if soldiers recorded casualties but it was gathered that many members of the terrorist group were killed during the attack.

A security source told one of our correspondents that the insurgents had earlier been sighted on Sunday on motorcycles heading for a Rural Grazing Area (RUGA), which prompted the military authorities to quickly deploy troops in the area.

It was gathered that the troops upon arriving combed the area but the terrorists were not sighted and they decided to stay overnight.

"While on their way back to the town Monday morning, unknown to them the terrorists had laid an ambush. They opened fire on the troops leading to the death of members of the CJTF," the source said.

The Chairman of Gubio LGA, Alhaji Bukar Sulum Zowo, confirmed the incident to newsmen at the state Specialists' Hospital, Maiduguri where he led officials to offer financial assistance and payment of medical bills for the injured victims.

He said, "We woke up to a piece of very sad news this morning as Boko Haram killed our CJTF Chairman, Alhaji Mandama and other members in a road ambush in Gubio. We prayed to Almighty Allah to grant eternal rest for the souls of the deceased and wish other victims who sustained gunshot injuries quick recovery."

Although the council boss

declined to give the number of the victims, sources said that five people were killed including some military personnel during the ambush.

Daily Trust recalled that in March, the insurgents abducted the medical officer of Gubio General Hospital, Dr Bulama Gubio, who has not been released. All efforts to get security confirmation from the joint military taskforce, Operation Hadin kai, proved abortive at the time of filing this report.

Soldiers foil attack in Niger

Elsewhere, a planned attack on a military base in Sarkin-Pawa, the headquarters of Munya Local Government Area of Niger State, by suspected terrorists was foiled by soldiers in the base.

Daily Trust gathered that terrorists had already taken positions close to the military base around 2.23am when the troops responded and engaged them in a gun duel.

A military source who described the success as one of a kind because no life was lost on the side of the soldiers said the troops were strengthened by the swift response of a reinforcement of troops who drove to Sarkin-Pawa in a few minutes from Minna, the state capital to save the situation.

Salis Mohammed Sabo, the spokesperson for the Coalition of Shiroro Association, said "Terrorists attacked the military camp in the late hours but unfortunately for them, the gallant soldiers were on alert."

"The terrorists came in hundreds trying to dislodge the military base. The military engaged them in a gun duel, which lasted for about two hours until the military called for reinforcement and successfully neutralised them."

He said the energy and passion the security operatives had exerted in recent times in the fight against terrorists in the area had restored their hope.

Reacting to the development, the Niger State governor, Alhaji Abubakar Sani Bello, said the planned attack would have been devastating if not for the swift response by soldiers in Sarkin-Pawa and the reinforcement team from Minna.

The governor in a statement by his Chief Press Secretary, Mary Noel-Berje, commended the military and other security agencies for their swift response.

"The government and the people of Niger State are truly hopeful with the way our security operatives always respond to attacks despite the poor nature of the terrain in which they fight the enemies of the state."

"The state is in closed collaboration with the federal government to ensure that no stone is left unturned to put an end to these criminals that have held farming communities in ransom, denying them access to their means of livelihood," the



■ Chief of Defence Staff, General LEO Irabor

statement said.

Daily Trust reports that terrorists loyal to ISWAP and Ansaru have established cells in many communities in Niger and other states in North Central and North West. Two weeks ago, the terrorists killed at least 15 soldiers of the 45 Battalion, Bida who were on a rescue mission following an attack on a mining site being managed by Chinese nationals at Ajata-Aboki in Gurmana Ward of Shiroro Local Government Area of the state.

They also killed seven policemen during the attack.

4 housewives, 5 children abducted in Katsina

In Katsina State, Bandits have abducted nine people including four housewives and five children from Shema Quarters in Dutsin-Ma Local Government Area.

The attack came a few days after the killing of the Area Commander, ACP Aminu Umar, who was referred to as the 'god of Dutsinma' by the bandits themselves.

Daily Trust gathered that the bandits stormed the Shema quarters within Dutsin-Ma town at about 11:30pm on Sunday and operated for about 30 minutes before the arrival of some security personnel.

A resident of the quarters who pleaded anonymity told our reporter that it was the first time they had come under such attack.

"It was raining at the time and one of our neighbours called me that some gunmen were trying to forcefully open our neighbour's house, one Abdulaziz Lawal and there was nothing we could do because they were shooting guns."

"Eventually, they broke into the house, kidnapped a housewife and her little baby; another housewife and her younger sister. Then at the household of Usman Dattif Yarima, they kidnapped two wives and three children, making a total of nine in the quarters," the resident said.

"When contacted, the police spokesman in Katsina, SP Gambo Isah, who confirmed the incident,

said nine persons were abducted and that the police were on the trail of the attackers to be able to rescue the victims.

He said security had been beefed up in the area with some changes including the transfer of the DPO and deployment of more personnel.

2 killed, 1 injured in Plateau

Bandits Sunday night ambushed soldiers who were on patrol in the Kampani community of Wase Local Government Area of Plateau State. A resident, Salisu Dahiru, said two civilians were killed and one other injured when they were hit by stray bullets.

The spokesperson for Operation Safe Haven (OPSH), a multi-security task force maintaining peace in the state, Major Ishaku Takwa, who also confirmed the attack, said, "it was an ambush."

"The criminals came out from the forest and opened fire on a moving vehicle. One was dead and one sustained an injury in his hand. Troops are trailing them as information from the community is vital to clear the criminals."

Salisu, who identified the deceased as Alhaji Bappale Yawale and Abdul Danladi kongurmi, said the assailants arrived in the community around 8pm.

"There was a serious exchange of fire between the bandits and the soldiers but the soldiers successfully repelled the criminals," he said.

The latest ambush is the second in three days within the general area of Zurak, Kampani and Kogin Pai communities of the said LGA.

On Saturday, no fewer than 1,000 cattle were rustled by bandits in the Kogin Pai community of the same Wase LGA.

7-year-old killed, 10 abducted in Abuja

A seven-year-old boy simply identified as Ayuba was killed when bandits struck at the Paikon Basa community in Gurdil ward of Abaji Area Council of Abuja.

A resident, James Gwatana, said

bandits wielding sophisticated weapons invaded the community Friday night. He said apart from the child who was killed, a man and his wife were also hit by stray bullets.

"In fact, the entire Paiko community was terrified because of the sound of gunshots of the bandits. It was as a result of the sporadic shooting that the seven-year old boy was killed," he said.

He said the bandits abducted four residents and raided some shops where they carted away foodstuffs.

The District Head of Gulida, Abubakar Sadauna, confirmed the incident to our reporter via telephone. He said the couple shot had been taken to a private hospital for treatment.

"I later received information over the weekend that two among the four kidnapped victims, later escaped from the abductors' den," he said.

He said the Yaba Police Division headquarters had been informed about the attack, adding that the police went to the scene and saw the corpse of the 7-year-old boy before it was buried.

Daily Trust gathered that the bandits later proceeded to a neighbouring Mawogi community, two kilometers away from Gasakpa, and abducted six villagers.

The spokesperson for the FCT Police Command, DSP Adeh Josephine, did not reply to a text message sent to her over the reported attack.

Mop up criminals to save lives

A security expert, Ismail Saleh said only a deliberate mop up of criminals across all regions in the country will end sporadic attacks.

"Terrorists, bandits and other criminals are everywhere, hence the sporadic attacks that we are witnessing even though they might not necessarily be coordinated by the same cartel."

"Assorted criminals are having a field day because they know our security operatives are overstretched. The only way we contain this menace is by deliberately targeting their enclaves and reclaiming out forests and bushes that are now no-man's land," he said.

On his part, Bayo Alabi, a retired police officer said there must be a blend of intelligence gathering and deployment of technology to contain crimes.

"Criminals move freely during the day and at night because they know that our surveillance infrastructure is weak," he said.

"They communicate freely through telephone calls and very few of them are being tracked. We have to limit our rhetoric on phantom successes against criminals and confront them head-on. If they are defeated, the news will naturally be there but it is unthinkable that terrorists would launch attacks about the same time on four states and the FCT which is the seat of power," he said.