

# How airstrikes killed 18 vigilantes, injured 9 others in Niger

From Abubakar Akote,  
Minna

At least 18 special vigilantes have been killed in Tuesday afternoon air bombardment in Galkogo, Shiroro Local Government Area of Niger State.

Daily Trust gathered that the commander of the vigilantes who is currently recuperating at the emergency unit of the IBB Specialist Hospital and his men were alerted of the movement of bandits towards Shiroro and Munya LGAs when they were caught in the airstrikes.

Sources said nine others including the commander were recuperating at the IBB Specialist Hospital, Minna.

Some sources said the wrong bombardment was caused by miscommunication between the air operators and the commander of the special vigilantes.

Although Nigerian Air Force (NAF) had yet to make any official statement on the incident, Daily Trust gathered that a delegation, led by the Commander, Air Force Base, Minna was at the IBB Specialist Hospital to sympathize with the

injured victims.

The air force has regularly carried out air raids in some banditry ridden states to target terrorists operating in rural communities

Daily Trust also gathered that seven corpses of vigilantes who were natives of Shiroro and Munya local governments were buried amid tears in Zumba, Shiroro Local Government while one was buried in Minna, the state capital.

The remaining 10 others were said to be still in the mortuary of the IBB Specialist Hospital.

The Police Public Relations Officer (PPRO) in Niger State, DSP Wasiu Abiodun, did not respond to enquiries by our correspondent.

The State Commissioner for Internal Security and Humanitarian Affairs, Emmanuel Umar, also did not respond to calls or replied a message sent to him by our correspondent.

Daily Trust, however, gathered that the visit by the air force commander to the IBB Specialist Hospital on Wednesday was greeted with anger by some relations of some victims.



■ Governor Sani Bello of Niger State

The Chairman, Shiroro Local Government, Akilu Isyaku Kuta, told our correspondent on the telephone that the situation in Shiroro and its neighbouring Munya had been tense in the last six days.

"We have left everything in the hand of God because I was recently a victim too. Only God saved my life; bandits nearly killed me.

"On Sunday, we reported the situation to our security agencies and they came, doing their best. We also have vigilantes in Galkogo, Kuchi and other parts of Munya Local Government. But unfortunately, because of the large number of bandits and we don't have more security

operatives, the situation has not been curtailed. You will just see 500 security agents while bandits are more than 800 in number. And if you want to curtail such type of situation, we are supposed to have more security operatives, at least more 2, 000.

"Now, the vigilantes that were assisting in protecting our people, on Tuesday, an aircraft came and dropped bombs in their centre and 18 people lost their lives. So, those people that have been saving our communities from attacks have run away and people have fled their homes and bandits are still inside the villages," Kuta lamented.

He called on the federal government to recruit more people into various security agencies, saying that "our youths are ready to serve the country."

Residents said no fewer than 10 communities had been invaded in the last five days in Munya and Shiroro alone with many lives lost and people kidnapped.

Dozens of residents especially women and children have also fled their homes to Kuta, the Headquarters of Shiroro Local Government and Gwada while others have headed to Minna, the

state capital.

Sani Abubakar Yusuf Kokki, the Co-Convener of Concerned Shiroro Youths, said the attackers had been sacking villages unchallenged and wreaking havoc.

"They have intensified attacks which have resulted in gruesome killings, maiming, arsons and dispossessing locals of their belongings among other crimes against humanity.

"The most hit local governments in their recently renewed attacks are Shiroro, Munya and Paikoro local governments." He said.

## Bandits kill 2 vigilantes

Similarly, two vigilantes have been reportedly killed in Kuchi, a community in Munya Local Government Area of Niger State.

Residents said the bandits who invaded Kuchi around 10am on Wednesday blocked all the exit routes and operated till 5pm.

Aliyu Idris, a resident, told our correspondent around 5pm on Wednesday that they were still in the bush trying to flee to Minna, the state capital, but bandits had taken control of Sarkin-Pawa-Minna route which they wanted to follow.

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