

Bandits kill 50, burn houses in Plateau

From Ado Abubakar Musa,
Jos

1 Bandits have killed more than 50 persons and burnt many houses at Zurak village in Bashar District of Wase Local Government Area of Plateau State on Monday.

But the police in the state said nine people were killed, and that some of the attackers have been arrested.

It was learnt that vigilantes and children were among the victims of the attack that also left many injured.

Residents of the community said the attack was launched around 5pm, and decried recurrent incidents of attacks in the area.

Those killed were said to have been buried, even as many other people are missing.

Many residents were also said to have fled the community.

A traditional ruler in the area and Tafidan Zurak, Lawan Idris, confirmed the incident to *Daily Trust* yesterday.

He said: "We have buried more than 50 people now. We are continuing with the burial because we have not finished.

"Search Operation is ongoing to recover other bodies. They killed many people, including our children."

He said the arrival of security personnel at 4:30pm yesterday had made it possible for the fleeing residents to return.

He said, "Half of the residents of the community had fled to Kampani, but they have started coming after hearing that



■ Plateau State Governor, Caleb Mutfwang

security personnel have arrived at the community.

"Our major problem is security. If we will have adequate security, we will remain in our community. People earlier fled because there was no security."

Sahpi'i Sambo, a youth leader in the area, told *Daily Trust* that the assailants arrived on motorcycles with sophisticated weapons and started shooting sporadically.

"On Monday morning, security personnel including operatives of the Department

of State Service (DSS), police and local vigilantes launched an attack on the terrorists' den, a thick bush located some kilometres from Zurak and cleared the area.

"So, while the combined security operatives were returning to Bashar, members of the vigilante group decided to stop at Zurak to eat before meeting up with the other security operatives who had proceeded to Bashar town.

"We believe that the terrorists followed the vigilantes to the

attacked community after hearing that the security operatives had left the vigilantes, and the situation would give the terrorists the opportunity to attack the vigilantes, knowing that they were not armed."

7 bandits killed in the attack - Police

The Spokesperson for the Plateau State Police Command, DSP Alabo Alfred, has confirmed the attack, explaining that the incident occurred after an aggressive onslaught on bandits by a combined security team of DSS and other security operatives in Bangalala Forest in Wase, where seven bandits have been neutralised.

In a statement sent to *Daily Trust*, DSP Alfred said: "Other bandits who fled during the operation attacked Zurak and Dakai Villages, killing nine persons and burnt down six houses while on the run.

"Following the incident, the Commissioner of Police, Plateau State Command has made more deployment to the area and has directed the Area Commander of Langtang to relocate his base to Wase Local Government Area with immediate effect.

"The Command is also pleased to announce to the state government and the people of Plateau State that one of the bandits who escaped and went to seek treatment at a hospital in Wase was arrested with gunshot wounds. The suspect has been transferred to the State Criminal Investigation Department (SCID), Jos for discreet investigation," the statement said.

Axis no longer peaceful

Daily Trust reports that the latest incident is coming two years after gunmen launched devastating attacks on many communities of Kukawa, Gyanbahu, Dungur, Yelwa, Dadda, Wanka, Shuwaka, Gwammadaji, Dadinkowa and Keram in the same Wase and Kanam LGAs, where 141 persons were confirmed killed and over 100 houses were set ablaze.

During the attack, residents of the affected communities fled to Dengi, the headquarters of Kanam LGA, to take refuge, as many women and children were left widows and orphans.

Wase and Kanam share a border and have a lot in common; as residents of the two areas engage in different businesses on a daily basis.

After the April 11, 2022 attack, security agencies, including the police said the gunmen responsible came from the Bangalala Forest in Wase, near borders between Plateau, Bauchi and Taraba states, explaining that the forest has been a hideout for bandits.

Besides, our correspondent reports that several villages of Wase have experienced a series of attacks in recent times, as surviving victims and community leaders continue to call for deployment of security operatives.

On Mar 12, this year, seven people were killed while many others injured in the same Zurak village of Wase during a market day.