

# Over 40 CJTF operatives killed in Zamfara

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One of Nigeria's most notorious bandit kingpins, Kachalla Bello Turji, reportedly killed more than 40 operatives of the Civilian Joint Task Force (CJTF) in a deadly ambush in Zamfara State on Sunday.

Among the casualties were four officers from the Department of State Services (DSS) and a former bandit-turned-security informant, Bashir Maniya, who was once a rival of Turji, it was gathered.

Local sources confirmed the attack occurred near Ruggar Chida, a remote community where Turji's father is believed to be the traditional leader.

The operatives, travelling in two vehicles and on motorcycles, were ambushed in an area that had experienced a communication blackout for the past two weeks due to ongoing military operations.

A source familiar with the incident told Daily Trust that the attack was well-coordinated and devastating.

"They were caught off-guard. Turji and his men killed over 40 of them and seized their vehicles and motorcycles," the source said.

"He was particularly elated because one of the deceased, Bashir Maniya, was his long-time rival."

The rivalry between Turji and Maniya had been fierce, with both men commanding loyal fighters in the forest regions of the North West.

Despite claiming to have repented, Maniya had remained a controversial figure, with Turji once accusing him in a video of being a "fake repentant" while his associates continued criminal operations.

In a disturbing video circulating on social media, Turji is seen celebrating with his fighters, chanting victory songs and pointing to the bodies of the fallen operatives, including Maniya.

"This is the corpse of the commander who led the operation," Turji reportedly declared in the footage.

The bodies of the slain operatives were later recovered with the assistance of the Nigerian Air Force, while those injured were promptly evacuated to a medical facility for treatment.

A security official, who confirmed the incident on condition of anonymity, described the attack as "unfortunate and avoidable," stressing the need for greater collaboration among Nigeria's security agencies and local communities.

"This kind of operation should not have been conducted



■ The scene of the bandits' attack on Keta community in Tsafe LGA of Zamfara State (File photo)

without synergy among key security forces—especially the army and the air force," the source said.

## Genesis of problem.

Earlier, it was gathered that over 30 bandits were killed in Shinkafi Local Government Area of Zamfara State, following a clash between two bandits' leaders; Kachalla Bello Turji and his former lieutenant, Bashir Maniya.

A source, who preferred anonymity said the bandits' leader, Bello Turji lost 38 foot-soldiers in the clash, while his rival, Maniya was allegedly killed. The clash, according to the sources, took place on Sunday in a forest between Shinkafi and Bafarawa Local Government Areas of Zamfara and Sokoto states.

A source, craved for anonymity, said although Turji had suffered heavy causality the clash, he succeeded in eliminating Bashir Maniya and two of his closest lieutenants.

"The relationship between Turji and Maniya became sore recently when the former instructed the people of Moriki and the surrounding villages to go and work on his farms, but the latter asked them to ignore the directives," he said.

The source explained that after the villagers ignored Turji's directives, the bandits' leader invaded several villages around Moriki and abducted over 40 people.

Following the development,

Maniya on his part, laid an ambush against Turji in a forest between Shinkafi and Bafarawa and killed 38 of his foot soldiers, it was gathered.

However, a security source, who doesn't want to be named said the bandits' leader, Bello Turji, then laid an ambush on the Civilian Joint Task Force (CJTF) vehicle on their way to Gusau.

The security personnel said the clash was between Turji and Maniya, but could not confirm the death of Maniya, as according to him, "there was no GSM network for him to get useful information from locals in Shinkafi and Bafarawa local governments."

"The GSM network service was temporarily suspended in Sabon Birni, Zurmi, Moriki and Shinkafi, due to the ongoing military operations. Therefore, communicating with the people on phone is not possible for now," he said.

Also confirming the clash, the Sokoto State Commissioner of Police, Ahmed Musa said the clash occurred in Shinkafi Local Government Area, noting that "I was briefed by my Divisional Police Officer in charge of Sabon Birni Local Government. Though the details were sketchy, it was confirmed. The locals have been talking about the clash and our men are still gathering information about the clash. My PRO has sent me the video clip in which Turji was jubilating."

## Similar incidents

The recent bandits' clash was not the first in Zamfara, as in February, the renowned bandits' leader, Ado Aliero, allegedly killed five bandits' leaders and many of their fighters.

Daily Trust reports that the clash which took place in Yankuzo village, Tsafe Local Government Area of Zamfara State, was between Aliero and two bandits' leaders, Kachalla and Dogo Bali, who teamed up against Aliero.

The confrontations took place in several locations including Yankuzo, Yan warden Daji and Munhaye and Mada villages in Tsafe and Gusau Local Government Areas of the state respectively.

One of the sources said: "It was said that Aliero had earlier warned Kachalla to stop harassing communities around Yankuzo, but he failed to adhere to this warning."

"Later, Kachalla invited his friend Dogo Bali, for an operation in Yankuzo area. While Kachalla and Bali were busy operating, Aliero placed his men at a strategic place for an ambush and they killed many of Kachalla and Bali's foot soldiers."

"It was gathered that the gun battle lasted for several hours and that Ado Aliero's group succeeded in killing many fighters among them; four prominent bandits' leaders; Dogo Bali, Dan Makaranta, Malam Gainaga, Mallam Tukur, and Malam Jaddi. Also, several other foot soldiers were injured in the gun fight, the source added.

Aliero also attacked the camp of Alhaji Dan Nigeria, another

notorious bandits' leader in Yan Warden Daji, forcing him to abandon the camp, leaving behind over 150 AK47 rifles, it was gathered.

The source said a similar clash among followers of the three bandits leaders occurred in Mada, Munhaye and Yanwari Daji villages, however, he could not ascertain the number of casualties recorded on both sides.

"We heard about a clash between fighters of Ado Aliero and that of Bali and Kachalla in those areas, but at the moment, I don't know how many people were killed in the fight," he said.

The source, who doesn't want his name in print, confirmed that "a significant number of bandits foot soldiers were killed in Dabar Gahori enclave when fighters of the three groups engaged in a gun battle."

"Dabar Gahori is among the big enclaves that is hosting large number of bandits of different groups. Virtually all the prominent bandits leaders have their foot soldiers in Dabar Gahori super camp."

"Bello Turji, Dan Karami, Dogo Gide, Aliero, Kachalla, Dogo Bali, Damina and Sani Karami, all have boys in this enclave," he added.

A resident of Hayin Alhaji village, Muhammad Salga, confirmed that Bali's foot soldiers went on rampage around Hayin Alhaji to Munhaye village, killing fighters of other groups after the death of their leader.

According to Salga, Kachalla's fighters were said to have attempted to confront Aliero at Yan Warden Daji, but could not succeed.