

News

Troops Rescue 13 Kidnap Victims In Benue, Kaduna

From **Saxone Akhaine** (Kaduna)
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(Makurdi)

• **Kill One Bandit, Recover Two AK-47 Rifles**

• **Abductors Of Benue Links Passengers Demand N20m Ransom**

THE Benue State Security Advisor, Joseph Har, has confirmed the release of seven persons who were abducted on October 9 at Igaji in the Benue South Senatorial District.

This was even as troops engaged terrorists in a gun battle in Maraban Jos community of Kaduna State, rescued six kidnapped victims and recovered two AK-47 rifles from the bandits.

Har informed The Guardian yesterday that acting on a security tip off, he got in touch with the Operation Enduring Peace III and the rescue operation was successfully carried out.

The Guardian further gathered that the rescue operation was carried out in

conjunction with the Benue community volunteer guards, the state government-owned security outfit, last Friday.

Among the rescued victims are: Fidelis Ogumala and his son, Sunday. Others are Flora Alpha, Stephen Onihi, Mary John, James Ebeh and Mary Ejeh.

All victims were returned to their community and were received by the traditional ruler of Igaji, Ogabidu Peter Adakole, before being taken to Otukpo General Hospital for medical attention.

Meanwhile, a fully loaded 18-seater bus belonging to Benue Links, conveying passengers from Makurdi to Naka, was ambushed and all passengers abducted last Fri-

day.

It was learnt that the kidnappers killed one of the male passengers in the bus before herding the rest into the bush.

The kidnappers have reportedly made contact with relatives of the victims and were demanding a ransom of N20.

Responding to the development, Har warned that the fact that Governor Hyacinth Alia was peace loving and was extending the olive branch should not be mistaken for weakness.

He called on kidnappers operating in the state to desist or leave for good.

Meanwhile, the ongoing clearance operation by troops of 1 Division Nigerian Army has continued to yield positive results according to the mili-

tary.

In a statement, yesterday, the Acting Deputy Director, Army Public Relations 1 Mechanised Division, Nigerian Army, Lt. Col. Musa Yahaya, stated that "on credible and timely intelligence on the kidnap of six persons at Hayin Tsando general area of Maraban Jos, the gallant troops quickly mobilised and embarked on a search and rescue operation."

He added that "the troops made contact with bandits/criminal elements and a heavy fire fight ensued."

Yahaya said: "During the operation, troops successfully rescued six kidnap victims, captured two AK 47 rifles and neutralised one bandit while others escaped with several degrees of gunshot wounds.