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JTF kills 15 kidnappers, rescues five hostages in Abia

•NBA calls for state of emergency

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A JOINT Task Force (JTF) of Army, Navy, Air Force, Police, and State Security Services (SSS) personnel stormed two camps used by kidnappers in Abia State in a commando-style operation on Thursday.

Five hostages were freed.

Up to 15 kidnappers were killed in a shoot-out, as they could not withstand the determined security agents who had mapped out the area for two weeks.

The JTF stormed the Ugwatu-Asa camp in a forest a few hours after the state broadcast by Governor Theodore Orji announcing an offensive against kidnappers.

Orji later visited the camps and could not hide his joy in taking the battle to the kidnap-

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pers, but said there will be no celebration until the 15 nursery and primary school pupils abducted on Monday are freed and handed safely back to their parents.

He told reporters on his return to Government House, Umuahia that he went to the camps to see things for himself and to also encourage the squad engaging the kidnappers.

"The children will be returned to their parents safely.

I want to assure you and their parents that," he stressed.

Orji said kidnappers have truncated the amnesty he proclaimed last Thursday and which was expected to expire on October 7 because of their incessant kidnappings, especially that of the innocent and hapless kids.

To him, no excuse can be given for their action except that they are criminals out to make money and destabilise the society.

He explained that the JTF is camped in Ohafia and he will soon hand over 23 vehicles to enable it operate in all the 17 councils in the state.

He urged the residents of Aba, some of whom have abandoned their homes, to return as normalcy has been restored, vowing that the onslaught against the kidnappers will continue until they are fully dislodged.

Orji appealed to Abians to supply the security agencies

with information that will lead to the eradication of the crime in the state.

However, in its reaction to the abduction of the 15 pupils, the Nigeria Bar Association (NBA) has called for a state of emergency in Abia where it said law and order has completely broken down.

NBA President Joseph Daudu made the demand at a press conference on Thursday in Abuja.

He also described President

Goodluck Jonathan's response to the incident as less than inspiring, noting that merely ordering the Inspector General of Police to arrest the hoodlums shows helplessness in the face of a breakdown of law and order.

Said Daudu: "We call for a state of emergency in Abia State as there is a total breakdown of law and order; for less, state of emergency had been declared in the past or are there double standards?"

"Nigerians want a justice sys-

tem that works in the interest of justice. The NBA rightly expects a system of justice that gives every person fair and equal access to justice and guarantees the dignity, rights, and security of every person and all communities, regardless of money or any other difference.

"The kidnapping of innocent school children has once again brought to the fore the dire state of policing in Nigeria and the continuous failure of our criminal justice system."

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