

TENSION IN PLATEAU AS JTF KILLS 20 GUNMEN

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By Onoja Audu/Jos.

Uneasy calm pervades Langtang North and South federal constituencies on Friday, following Thursday attacks by suspected Fulani herdsmen that claimed 32 persons, as the affected families spoil for reprisal against their attackers in the face of military deployment to the two local government areas to curtain the crisis.

To calm the tensed atmosphere in the area, *Saturday Independent* learnt that the state deputy governor, Amb Ignatius Longjan, who hails from the zone, on Friday, summoned a meeting with chairmen and stakeholders in the six local government areas at Shendam Local Government Secretariat to dialogue with all parties in the renewed attacks and killings in the area.

The headquarters of the Special Military Task Force, Operation Safe Haven, in a press statement in Jos on Friday and signed by the spokesman, Captain Salisu Mustapha, said: 'This is to inform the general public and good people of Plateau State that on June 27, 2013 at about 1a.m., suspected Fulani gunmen stormed and attacked Magama, Bongong and Karkashi villages in Langtang South Local Government Area, killing about 28 persons,' adding that when men of the STF went to the scene to bring the situation under control, the gunmen engaged them in gun duel that lasted several hours.

Captain Mustapha said that in the process, about 20 of the assailants were killed while some, who sustained gunshot wounds were arrested and motorcycles, weapons and ammunition were also recovered from them.

According to him, the attackers withdrew towards Yamini, Yelwa Shendam, Agikamai villages in neighboring Shendam Local Government Area, adding that some suspected Taroh youths in a reaction, set ablaze some settlements around Yamini and Agikamai.

The situation, he said, has been brought under control by men of the STF and the area secured, as more troops have been deployed in the area. 'STF Men are still in the area conducting robust patrol to ensure that there are no further attacks on the innocent people.

Captain Mustapha called on all law abiding citizens to go about their normal businesses, warning that any individual or persons bent on disrupting the peace of the state have made themselves enemies of peace and would be treated as such. He assured that the STF would leave no stone unturned in fishing out the perpetrators of attack.

Meanwhile, the state House of Assembly has summoned an emergency meeting during which the member representing Langtang South constituency, Hon. Joyce Rapnap, in a motion, told the House of the "current attacks against her constituents by their assailants, who killed and maimed whoever they were able to lay their hands on," wondering why even students writing NECO examinations were not spared by the gunmen.

After much deliberation, the House resolved to summon all the local government chairmen in the senatorial district for a meeting next week to furnish the House of the events in their respective areas.

Meanwhile, The Commissioner of Police Plateau State, Chris Olakpe, on Friday called on all the combatants in Southern Plateau to lay down their arms and submit such arms and ammunition to law enforcement agents, warning that any one caught with such weapons would be made to face the full weight of the law.

The commissioner in a press conference in his office, on Friday, said only 10 people were killed in the attacks, even as the STF spokesman, Captain Salisu Mustapha, in a press statement, confirmed that 28 persons were killed.

Saturday Independent had gathered that the Thursday clash between Fulani nomads and peasant farmers in Bolgan, Karkashi and Magama villages claimed 32 people.

The state Commissioner of Police, Mr Olakpe, said report by his men on ground claimed that four people were injured, adding that no arrest has been made.

Olakpe said security has been beefed up in the affected areas and normalcy restored, adding that security chiefs in the state had a meeting with the affected communities on the need to maintain and sustain peace in the state before the unfortunate incident.

According to him, another meeting has been fixed to hold in Langtang South with the youths, community leaders and major stakeholders to ensure total reconciliation.

He warned the youths in the affected communities to submit to law enforcement agents all weapons in their possession, warning that any one caught with such weapons would be made to face the full weight of the law.

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