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Military Raises The Alarm: Herdsmen Targeting Abuja

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The military yesterday alleged that the herdsmen that have been killing innocent people in some states in the north are targeting Abuja, the seat of the government, and cautions the populace against identifying with them.

The herdsmen, who have been operating under the cover of the night, according to the military, were hired by some unscrupulous faceless people to unleash terror on the populace.

The terrorists have killed about 2, 000 innocent people in the last few weeks.

The military has been dispatching troops to Benue, Nasarawa and Plateau states at the directive of President Goodluck Jonathan.

Some top officers that were sent to Benue on fact-finding mission were said to have written a damning report that showed that the herdsmen were coming into the country from the neighbouring countries to attack, kill and destroy.

The report, according to a top officer of the Defence Headquarters, also revealed that the herdsmen are planning to launch some sporadic attacks on the federal capital. Speaking with LEADERSHIP, a senior military officer quoted excerpts from the report but promised that the military is up to the task of stopping them from entering Abuja.

He said: "It is a pity some people who do not understand the agenda of these criminals pretending to be Fulani herdsmen are identifying with them and attacking the military for dealing with them. These hoodlums, we believe, were hired by some faceless people in the country from the neighbouring countries. They have attacked Adamawa, Taraba, Benue, Nasarawa states, and you would know that Nasarawa is the closest state to Abuja.

"Already they have some camps in Kogi, Niger, and Kaduna states. Some of them are said to be living inside one big forest in Niger (State). All these states surround the Federal Capital Territory. Their mission in those states is to displace the indigenes, take over their land and pretend to be taking care of their cattle. They have already done that in Benue State where two local government councils were sacked; most of the towns and villages there were razed down; many were killed and these forced those who survived their attacks to relocate.

"These herdsmen were coming from the neighbouring Nasarawa State. We saw some of them with their cattle grazing in the two local governments where their people have run away and they pretend as if nothing unusual has happened. In one of the villages they razed down, they used marker to write 'Nasarawa State' as if they were doing annexation. Once they settled down in all these states, their next move is Abuja, but this we would not allow, no matter the propaganda being used against the military."

Military faults NHRC report

Also, the military has faulted the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) report which indicted the Nigerian Army and the Department of State Services (DSS) for their role in the killing of eight people in the Apo District of the Federal Capital Territory on September 20, last year.

The commission, through its chairman, Professor Chidi Odinkalu, said the Army and the DSS failed to prove that the eight persons killed

and 11 others injured due to an attack launched by the security operatives in Apo were members of Boko Haram.

Distress call saves community as troops continue onslaught on terrorists

The Defence Headquarters yesterday said it was a timely distress call that saved communities besieged by terrorists in search of food around the Lake Chad area.

The terrorists who were said to be heavily armed scampered for safety on sensing the approach of troops before they could carry out their mission.

According to a statement issued in Abuja and signed by the Defence spokesman, Major General Chris Olukolade, the troops of the Multi-National Joint Task Force on patrol of the area have so far recovered some arms and ammunition left behind by the fleeing terrorists.

10 killed, 15 injured in Wukari

Over 10 people were yesterday reportedly killed, 15 injured and 20 houses burnt down in Jibu village in Wukari local government area of Taraba State. A resident of the village, Mr Dan Anguyo, told LEADERSHIP at Wukari that the armed men identified to be Jukums numbering over 39 invaded the village in the early hours of yesterday shooting people and burning houses.

Anguyo, who said he narrowly escaped the attack, also confirmed to LEADERSHIP that nobody knows the actual reasons behind the attack on the innocent people.

When contacted, the spokesman of the state police command, ASP Joseph Kwaji, noted that the command had quickly drafted more of its men to the affected area to bring the ugly situation under control while investigation into the matter continued.

Zamfara massacre: Reps summon IGP, Gusau, NSA

Worried about the death of over 200 people in the hands of gunmen in Maru and Zurmi local government areas of Zamfara State, the House of Representatives has invited the minister of defence, Gen. Aliyu Gusau (rtd), and the inspector-general of police, Alhaji Mohammed Abubakar, to appear before its committee on national security to shed light on the killings.

The decision was taken yesterday during plenary, following the adoption of a motion of urgent national importance moved by Hon. Ibrahim Gusau (PDP, Zamfara).

The lawmakers also directed the National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA) to immediately deliver relief materials to the distressed citizens of the affected communities.

Leading debate on the motion, Gusau called the attention of his colleagues to the April 3, 2014, killings where over 30 people were ambushed and killed in the towns of Yar-Tsaba and Birnin-Tsaba in Zurmi local government area. He went further to add that, on the April 5, over 200 innocent citizens were mercilessly killed in Yar-Galadima village by people suspected to be Fulani herdsmen.

He went further to inform the lawmakers that the gunmen who numbered over 100 operated freely for about four hours shooting at children, traders, vigilante, community leaders and clerics.

The incidents, Gusau lamented, has led to fear among residents of many villages in the affected areas over a repeat of the attacks. According to him, this had led to many fleeing their homes.

"The Fulani herdsmen have gradually become more daring, well organized and well-armed that no small units of security personnel can repel their attacks when they strike.

"These groups of attackers are becoming more coordinated and if not quickly terminated can turn into yet another organized terror group which can pose additional dimension to the security challenges in the country.

"The above gruesome statistics were for Zamfara State alone. Similar incidents have been recurring in Benue and Nasarawa states where several people were killed," he said.

Meanwhile, the House has advised the federal government to construct a military barracks in Doma, headquarters of Doma local government area of Nasarawa State, to accommodate a battalion to boost security in the southern senatorial district of the state where there have been a series of attacks in recent times.

While adopting the resolution which was sequel to a motion of urgent national importance sponsored by Hon. Mohammed Onawo (PDP) yesterday, the House also mandated its committees on Works and Army to ascertain why the project was not executed.

Needless killings must stop – Mark

Senate president David Mark has lamented the incessant killings in the north-central and north-east regions of the country, saying these needless killings must stop.

The Senate president made this plea after a point of order raised by Senator Kabir Marafa on the recent massacre in Zamfara.

"If there is any birthday gift that I would want, it is for us to end these needless and senseless deaths that we have in the country today.

"We wake every day and we hear of people being killed. First it was single unit — two, three people died; then tens, now hundreds, and we don't want it to go beyond this, and I hope and pray that all Nigerians will ensure that we bring these needless deaths to an end," he said.

Nasarawa killings: Fulani threatens to drag FG to criminal court

The Miyetti Allah Cattle Breeders Association, the socio cultural group of Fulanis, have threatened to drag the Nigerian government before the International Criminal Court over the killings of Fulani herdsmen by the Nigerian military in Nasarawa State.

Though the military authorities said those killed were insurgents who have terrorised farmers in Nasarawa and Benue states, the association said those killed were innocent Fulani, alleging that there is grand plot to eliminate the Fulani from Nigeria.

Addressing the press in Abuja, the Nasarawa State secretary of the Miyetti Allah Cattle Breeders Association, Alhaji Mohammed Hussein, urged the government to tender a public apology and pay compensation to the families of those killed by soldiers.

He said, "Our people were killed in their houses which they have inhabited for over 30 years without committing any crime. We are convinced beyond reasonable doubt there is a grand plot to eliminate the Fulani from Nigeria. Otherwise there is no reason why a people will continue to be killed in their houses by government troops who are supposed to protect them.

"This time around we cannot keep quiet, even if it means going to the International Criminal Court, because what is being done to us amounts to genocide and ethnic cleansing."

He said direct confrontation will never solve the issue, stressing that the Fulanis are open to positive dialogue that will resolve the issues.

He said though there may be bad eggs amongst the Fulanis "the primary responsibility of the government is to fish out the bad eggs and there are standard procedures for doing that".

He warned that the approach by applied by the government may degenerate into a dangerous situation that will be very difficult to handle.

Village head, 10 others killed in Borno

Suspected Boko Haram militants, in the early hours of yesterday, stormed Takulari village, in restive Chibok local government area of Borno State, killing 11 people and setting several houses alight.

The residents told the Hausa service of the *British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC)* that a village head and several others were killed in the attack.

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