

Scores killed, injured in troops, bandits firefight

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By Okodili Ndidi, Abuja

Troops of the Nigerian Air Force and suspected bandits were engaged in a bloody firefight at the weekend.

The bandits laid an ambush for the military men near Birnin Gwari in Kaduna State.

But the troops smashed their way through, killing scores of the bandits. They however lost some men.

Kaduna has been boiling since the beginning of the month. Bandits struck many times across five local government councils last week, killing 42 people in two of the instances.

The attacks led to the reinforcement of troops to support the police operation.

In Borno, Troops of Operation Lafiya Dole have killed two of the most-wanted Commanders of Boko Haram as terrorists of Islamic State of West Africa Province (ISWAP) intensified their insurgency.

Recounting the Kaduna incident, Director of Public Relations and Information, Nigerian Air Force, Air Vice-Marshall Ibikunle Daramola, said: “Troops of the 271 Nigerian Air Force (NAF) Detachment on 13 February, is foiled an ambush set up by a group of over 100 armed bandits at Ungwan Laya near Birnin Gwari in Kaduna State.

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“The gallant troops were able to fight their way through the ambush killing dozens of bandits in the process. Unfortunately, some NAF personnel paid the supreme price during the operation, while a few others sustained varying degrees of injuries. The injured personnel are currently receiving treatment at the NAF Hospital in Kaduna.

“The Chief of the Air Staff (CAS), Air Vice Marshal Oladayo Amao, on behalf all officers, airmen, airwomen and civilian staff of the NAF, commiserates with the families of the fallen heroes and prays that the Almighty God grants their souls peaceful repose.

“The CAS, who visited the injured personnel in the hospital, has urged all NAF personnel to remain resolute and continue to work assiduously, in synergy with sister Services and other security agencies, to rid the Northwest of all criminal elements.”

In a statement at the weekend, the Army Headquarters said the troops of Operation Tura Takaibango had eliminated two most wanted Boko Haram terrorists leaders Abul-Bas and Ibn Habib in an encounter at Pulka axis of Borno.

Its spokesman Brig.-Gen. Mohammed Yerima, said the renewed offensive operations by troops of Operation Lafiya Dole, had continued to inflict heavy casualty on Boko Haram and ISWAP terrorists in the North East.

He said the troops of 121 and 151 Battalions, laid ambush at the terrorists’ crossing point between Vuria and Guja settlements along Banki Junction – Pulka axis.

He said three terrorists, including the two wanted commanders, were neutralised during the ambush.

According to him, the troops recovered three GPMG, seven AK47 rifles, a belt of ammunition containing 446 rounds of 7.62mm, one Boxer motorcycle and one ITEL 2160 mobile phone among others.

“Abul-Bas and Ibn Habib were among the top BHTs commanders of the Shekau faction operating in Sambisa forest and environs.

“The two terrorist commanders have been on the intelligence watch-list for some time.

“Abul-Bas was a top commander second to Abu Fatima, while Ibn Habib was the BHT Commander in charge of Njimia and Parisu camps in the Sambisa Forest,” he said.

The spokesperson said the elimination of Abul-Bas and Ibn Habib by the gallant troops had inflicted a big blow on the operations of the terrorists and further boosted the morale of the frontline troops.

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