

Death toll in Plateau crisis now 85, leader claims

① • Five suspects held • Personnel shot in attack on troops, • Villagers flee Mangu

DEATH toll in gunmen attacks on about eight villages in Mangu Local Government Area of Plateau State rose to 85, National President, Mwaghavul Development Association, Joseph Gwankat, told reporters yesterday.

Onslaught by armed criminals suspected to be herdsmen continued unabated yesterday, after at least 37 people were reportedly killed at the wee hours of Tuesday at Fungzai and Kubwat villages in the same local government area.

Gwankat, after a security meeting at the palace of the traditional ruler in Mangu, said

From Kolade Adeyemi, Jos

that a search for missing persons was ongoing.

According to him, several communities were attacked simultaneously by suspected herdsmen who not only killed their victims- mostly women and children- but also set their homes ablaze and destroyed their farmlands.

The gunmen, in their numbers, snuck up on the communities in a dawn raid, killing helpless victims.

Most of the survivors fled with ghastly injuries and were receiving treatment in various hospitals within the local gov-

ernment area.

A community leader, who pleaded anonymity, told The Nation that 30 of the victims from Fungzai were given mass burial. Another batch of 22 in Kubwat and the five who died while receiving treatment in the early hours of yesterday were also given mass burial at about 3:30pm.

The survivors begged security agencies and the government to urgently stop the lingering insecurity in the local government and other parts of the state.

The sustained attacks by invaders have caused villagers to flee their homes with some

taking refuge at Mangu, the local government headquarters.

Residents, mostly women and children in Fungzai and Kubwat villages in Kombun District, Mangu, left their homes following Tuesday's killings in search of safety in the local government.

One of the villagers who relocated his families to Jos told The Nation that it was hopeless to remain in the community because they were under siege by gunmen.

"Dozens of our people have been killed and there is no sign that the attackers will stop the killings," he said.

Customs intercepts N127m fake drugs worth four suspects