

Many feared killed as soldiers, gunmen clash in Plateau

At least 30 gunmen • **Lagbaja in Mangu LG, orders troops to neutralise terrorists**

From Kolade Adeyemi, Jos

apparently on a mission to unleash fresh mayhem in Plateau State, were yesterday shot dead by troops in troubled Mangu Local Government Area.

The targets of the gunmen were said to be Satguru and Tyop villages.

The men however got more than they bargained for as soldiers who had been deployed in the area to protect lives and property routed them.

The invaders were no match for the soldiers who felled 30 of them.

Several other members of the invading team were also injured.

It was gathered that a few soldiers sustained injuries in the encounter.

The aborted attack came hours after Governor Caleb

Mutfwang relaxed the curfew imposed on the area from 8am to 4pm.

Sources said the gunmen had arrived the villages in a large number at about 7am and started attacking some communities along Gindiri Road.

Residents quickly contacted the soldiers who responded.

The Chairman, Mangu Local Government Area, Marcus Artu, confirmed the development to The Nation by phone.

But he could not say how many gunmen were killed.

"I cannot not give the casualty figure, but they are many, and this is the beginning of meeting their Waterloo.

"What I was told is that some attackers came out in large

numbers this morning (Saturday) and wanted to attack the people but the soldiers repelled them."

COAS to soldiers: Adopt more aggressive posture against those disturbing Plateau peace

The Chief of Army Staff, Lieutenant General Taoreed Lagbaja, on an assessment visit to Mangu LGA yesterday, ordered troops of the 3 Division Nigerian Army and the Joint Task Force Operation Safe Haven to adopt more aggressive posture and decisively stamp out terrorists causing mayhem in Plateau and neighbouring states.

"Go hard on those disturbing the peace of the Plateau and

neutralise any terrorist annihilating people and burning or destroying property and other economic valuables," he said while addressing them.

The COAS, who received briefing on the security situation from the General Officer Commanding 3 Division and Commander Operation Safe Haven, Major-Gen. Abdusalam Abubakar, acknowledged that the security dynamics on the Plateau are complex owing to its political background, interwoven with cultural and economic sentiments.

These, he added, accounted for the prolonged duration of the conflicts and the escalation in its lethality.

Gen. Lagbaja inspected the arms and ammunition recovered by the troops and com-

mended them for not allowing the crisis to escalate to other parts of the state.

He was confident that the troops would be more resilient and leave no stone unturned in ensuring that peace and tranquility is restored on the Plateau and other troubled parts of the country.

He charged the troops to live up to the expectations of all peace loving and law abiding residents of the Plateau, harping that trust is earned and the troops must do all within their means to maintain the trust of the people they are tasked to protect.

Lagbaja, who seized the opportunity to pay a courtesy call on Governor Mutfwang,

expressed appreciation to the government and people of Plateau State for their effort in ensuring that peace reigns in the state.

He said a marching order had been handed down to troops to sternly enforce law and order and to be decisive in tackling the security situation on the Plateau.

Mutfwang said he had never doubted the capability of the Nigerian Army and other security agencies in delivering on their constitutional mandate.

Mangu LGA was the scene of a massive attack by gunmen during the Christmas festivities when over 100 lives were lost. Another 30 people were killed in a separate attack by gunmen last week.

Shettima: No plan to relocate any agency from Abuja

• Pays tribute to Sardauna, past Northern