

# Sokoto airstrike: FG will investigate causes, ensure justice – Matawalle



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- *DHQ blames secondary explosion for death of villagers*

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- *Says drones used by terrorists are 'toys'*

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The Federal Government said yesterday that it would conduct a thorough investigation into Wednesday's accidental bombing that killed 10 people in Gidan Bisa and Runtuwa villages of Silame Local Government Area.

Government's assurance coincided with the clarifications by the Defence Headquarters (DHQ) that the death of 10 civilians in Gidan Bisa and Gidan Ruutuwa in Silame Local Government Area, Sokoto State, was as a result of a secondary explosion and not direct military airstrikes.

The Minister of State, Defence, Bello Mutawalle, assured of the investigation during a condolence visit to Governor Ahmed Aliyu in Sokoto.

He described what happened in the two villages as very unfortunate, and assured that thorough investigations would be conducted with a view to finding out what really happened, adding that justice would be done on the matter.

"Mr President is worried by the unfortunate incident and he asked me to come and condole you over what happened," he said.

The minister also added that at times the military air strikes hit wrong locations due to the wrong information they may have been given while carrying out operations.

He, however, said that security reports had confirmed that the area where the incident occurred was being dominated by the Lakurawa bandits.

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He lamented the way and manner Nigeria has been placed on red alert on terrorism, and reiterated the commitment of the Federal Government to make the country safe.

The minister extolled the commitment of Governor Ahmed Aliyu on the fight against banditry and other criminal activities in the state.

According to him, Dr Aliyu was the only Governor who willingly requested for a military base in his state, hence he reassured the governor of military's support to make Sokoto State safe.

"We will continue to provide all the necessary equipment and gadgets to Sokoto State," he assured.

The minister also made a personal donation of N10 million to the families of those killed and those receiving treatment at the hospital as a result of the injuries they sustained from the bombings.

Responding, Governor Aliyu called on the military to improve on their information gathering and surveillance so as to avoid hitting the wrong targets.

He commended the military and other security agencies for their commitment in making the state safe.

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He thanked President Bola Tinubu for the concern he has shown over the accidental bombing of the two villages in the state.

Governor Aliyu also thanked him for his support to the state in the fight against banditry.

The Governor also described the accidental bombing on the innocent souls as something destined to happen and prayed the Almighty Allah to prevent a reoccurrence.

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## DHQ blames secondary explosion for death of villagers

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The Defence Headquarters said yesterday that the death of 10 civilians in Gidan Bisa and Gidan Ruutuwa in Silame Local Government Area, Sokoto State, was as a result of a secondary explosion and not direct military airstrikes.

Ten civilians died in the incident.

According to the military high command, the airstrikes were indeed targeted at the Lakurawa terrorists group and their logistics base, but unfortunately, a secondary explosion occurred, leading to the loss of some villagers' lives.

The Nigerian Air Force (NAF) has also announced that it would investigate the incident towards ensuring that such mistakes don't happen in the future.

Both the DHQ and the NAF have emphasised that all military operations are based on thorough intelligence and reconnaissance missions to minimise harm to civilians.

NAF's spokesperson, Air Vice Marshal Olusola Akinboyewa, assured that the reports of possible harm to civilians would be thoroughly investigated, and they will update the public accordingly.

The military high command spoke through the Director of Defence Media Operations, Maj-Gen. Edward Buba, during a press conference at the Defence Headquarters in Abuja yesterday.

While giving updates on the airstrikes that was carried out on December 25, Gen. Buba said: "The air strike indeed hit the logistic base of the terrorists, which led to secondary explosions, and it was these secondary explosions that led to some casualties that was earlier reported."

The defence spokesman explained that prior to the operation on December 25, there was confirmed and heightened terrorist activities in the area.

He said as a result, "a sustained intelligence, surveillance, reconnaissance was conducted for an extended period of time to confirm the presence of the terrorists hibernating there and to also make sure that those in that location were indeed terrorists."

Gen. Buba explained that because of the painstaking measures, the operation, which should have taken place on an earlier date, had to be rescheduled to December 25 when the operation was conducted.