

Military liberates Gwoza, searches for Chibok Girls

Over 100 terrorists killed

CHRIS AGBAMBU - ABUJA

THE military, on Friday, liberated the only stronghold of the Boko Haram terrorists in Gwoza, Borno State.

The Director of Defence Information, Major General Chris Olukolade, who announced this while briefing the media, said that the cordon and search operation is ongoing and that the question on Chibok girls is hasty.

According to him, "when it is time, we will be able to say the hostages that are being held and those released."

He said that "Gwoza is the epicentre of their activities and we are working in conjunction with our neighbours who have also been assigned to specific areas to liberate but the epicentre, which is Gwoza, has been knocked off."

Olukolade announced that the military took over Gwoza, "the terrorists phantom caliphate headquarters, this morning."

He said that sequel to the violent and heinous crimes perpetrated by terrorists in North Eastern Nigeria, the armed forces of Nigeria were asked to halt the carnage and restore sanity in that region and this resulted in the deployment of land and air forces.

"Consequently, the deployment denied the terrorists the freedom of action they had hitherto enjoyed and they resorted to diversionary tactics known with terrorist groups around the world by carrying out isolated attacks and bombings."

"The series of deployment and operational effectiveness of the military were, however, challenged by the porosity of the borders, which gave the terrorists leverage to operate in Nigeria and retreat into safe havens in neighbouring countries of Niger, Chad

and Cameroon"

He said that the recent reinvigoration of a partnership between Nigeria and these neighbouring countries, under the auspices of Multi-National Joint Task Force (MNJTF), provided the desired response to the challenge, as these border areas that hitherto served as hideouts for the terrorists have been actively dominated by troops in the MNJTF.

This development, he added, decimated the fighting capabilities of the terrorists, as the Nigerian military carried out a final onslaught on

the nation's enemies within the country and these successful operations culminated in the dislodgment of terrorists from towns and communities in Adamawa, Yobe and Borno states.

"Just this morning, the gallant troops of the Nigerian military, in a concerted and well-coordinated land and air operations, liberated Gwoza, the headquarters of their so-called caliphate which they renamed 'darul hikima'. This was preceded by successive sack of terrorists from towns and villages leading to Gwoza, the main objective. Several of the terrorists have

died and many of them captured in the process.

"A lot of arms and ammunition have been recovered and the administrative headquarters completely destroyed. A massive cordon and search has commenced to locate any of the fleeing terrorists or hostages in their custody," he said.

Olukolade disclosed that as of Friday, the military has been able to take over virtually all the enclaves and hideouts where the terrorists were hiding and it is observed that some of the terrorists are currently fleeing towards border areas.

Obahiagbon calls for peace in today's polls

BY BLESSING EKUM

A former member of the House of Representatives and popular politician, Mr. Patrick Obahiagbon, has asked Nigerians to eschew violence as they vote today.

Obahiagbon's statement issued on Friday reads:

"In the next couple of hours, we are expected and obligated as patriotic citizens to vote for a president of our choice."

"The presidential cam-

paigns have been quite titilatively titivating and all the political parties and their presidential candidates have had the sui generis democratic lacuna to dialectically interface with Nigerians.

"It remains for me to urge all Nigerians with voting rights to have the courage of their conviction by coming out to cast their votes. This is the path to peregrinate, taking into immutable cognition the sapient preachment of Edmund

Burke when he said inter alia that "evil men progress only when good men fold their hands and do nothing."

"May I also use this opportunity to call on the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) and the security agencies that have anything to do with the conduct of the elections to discharge their onerous duties most professionally, without fear favour and without let hindrance."

Supreme Court affirms Akpabio as governor

THE Supreme Court, on Friday, confirmed Mr. Godswill Akpabio as the validly-elected governor of Akwa Ibom State, in a unanimous decision that brought to a close a four-year legal tussle to unseat him.

The court ruled that Mr. Akpabio was the suitable candidate of the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP), a claim that had for years been challenged by Frank Okon, who also contested the party's ticket in April

2011.

Mr. Okon had asked the court to nullify Mr. Akpabio's election because he (Okon) and his supporters were not availed the information on the scheduled primaries after the cancellation of the previous exercise.

Mr. Okon's argument was upheld at the level of the Court of Appeal.

But, in a unanimous judgment delivered on Friday by Justice Bode-Rhodes Vivour, on behalf of Justice

John Fabiyi, and six other justices, the Supreme Court set aside the ruling of the Appeal Court in favour of Mr. Okon and restored the judgment of the High Court on the matter.

The High Court had ruled that Mr. Okon was not qualified to contest the outcome of the election in the first place, having admitted in his affidavit before the court that he and his supporters were not allowed to participate in the primaries.