

METRO

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Air Force, troops kill 37 terrorists in Niger

—Soldier dies during operation

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THE Nigerian Air Force (NAF) and ground troops have killed 37 bandit leaders and gangs terrorising some communities in Niger State. The operation was conducted by a military fighter jet and helicopter gunship on Wednesday in Kontagora, Mariga and Rijau local government areas of the state.

Nigerian Tribune gathered that ground troops, in

conjunction with some local vigilante groups, were also involved in the operation in which they also recovered rustled livestock from the bandits.

It was further gathered that the 37 bandits were killed around Shadadi and Moundu areas of Niger North senatorial district.

The bandits had launched attacks on several communities in Kontagora, Mariga and Rijau local government areas, killing many people and abducting several others when the security agen-

cies intervened.

A source said the Air Component of Operation Gama Aiki on Wednesday dispatched an Alpha jet and helicopter gunship to the locations to take out the targets before the ground troops and local volunteers moved in to finish off remnants of the terrorists.

A source involved in the operation said: "At Maundu, several bandits in black clothes were sighted running to take cover under nearby clusters of trees, and the aircraft took turns

to engage them.

"Additionally, at Shadadi, radio contact was established with the ground troops who reported the movement of bandits and rustled cattle towards Farin Doki, Bangi, Konam Dutse axis.

"Accordingly, the crew proceeded to the location to take out the targets.

"At Farin Doki, several bandits dressed in black clothes were sighted with about 1,000 rustled cattle.

"They were engaged with rockets. The fleeing ban-

aits, after the initial rocket strikes, were mopped up with cannons."

A member of the vigilante who was also involved in the operation said: "One of the jets fired from afar, while the other fired close to the ground. The surviving bandits, following the attacks, were trying to escape when the ground troops and vigilante moved in.

"This morning [Thursday], we have counted at least 37 bodies, including some suspected to be their leaders."

Meanwhile, **PRNigeria**

gathered that a ground soldier lost his life after sustaining injuries from the military bombardments he was caught in.

The terrorists, who were fleeing onslaughts of troops in Niger, were intercepted at Labi, on the Kaduna-Birnin Gwari road, a security intelligence officer, disclosed to **PRNigeria**.

The source, who pleaded anonymity, said the bandits were reported to be in contact with ground troops around the Labi general area.