

Bandits unleash terror across north

• Suspected herders kill 18 in Benue communities • Gunmen murder 2, abduct 1 in Bauchi
• Bandits kill village head, three others in Kebbi

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MURDEROUS bandits have swept through a number of communities in Benue, Kebbi and Bauchi states in a wave of terror that claimed several lives.

In Benue State, suspected herders invaded four communities in Guma Local Government Area, killed 18 persons and injured several others.

According to natives, the invaders stormed Ukohol village on Thursday which was a market day. There, they killed several people.

It was gathered that when the herders were done with Ukohol, they moved to other nearby communities where they continued their shoot-

ing spree.

The chairman of Guma Local Government Area, Mike Ubah, confirmed the attack and the killing of 18 persons.

Speaking to newsmen on Friday, Ubah said: "My people at Ukohol were attacked by armed herders who killed about 10 people. The worst of it all is that they even killed children below the age of two."

"They didn't stop at that, they went to three settlements around and killed eight more persons, bringing the number of the dead to 18. The herders killed 10 at the market and eight in the villages when they were returning.

"Security operatives were prompt and that is what saved the day. If they had delayed, the causality figure would have been more than that.

"It was a market day. They

went there and started shooting. What is happening now is that they are trying to dislodge people from their villages and settlements, occupy them and graze in the night.

"The herders appeared in black attires. No village was spared. The whole of the 10 council wards in Guma were affected."

When contacted, the state police spokesperson, Catherine Anene, said: "Incident confirmed but no details yet."

In a related development, gunmen on Friday stormed Toro, headquarters of Toro Local Government Area of Bauchi State, killed two young men and abducted one other.

A local source told *Saturday Tribune* that the gunmen arrived in the town around 1.20 a.m. and operated for about two hours moving from one

point to another without any form of resistance.

The source said the local vigilantes were helpless as they could not match the firepower of the assailants.

According to him, at the end of the operation, two promising youths, Abba and Anas Wanzam, were killed by the gunmen. The two had come out to join the vigilantes to repel the gunmen when they were shot dead.

He named the person that was kidnapped by the gunmen as Abdulrahman Danmalam, saying the victim was believed to be a hardworking youth in the area.

He called on the government to take urgent measure to protect the lives and property of residents of the area who, he said, had continually been terrorised by bandits and other criminal elements.

At the time of filing this report, the state Police Public Relations Officer, Ahmed Ibrahim, could not be reached for comment on the incident.

Similarly, four persons, including a village head, were killed by bandits who invaded Tunga Rafin, a community in Augie Local Government Area of Kebbi State.

According to a source, the bandits numbering about 70 invaded the remote village on Wednesday night, killing the village head identified as Abubakar Magaji and one other person.

The source said the bandits killed two other persons they encountered as they fled the community.

A member of the community who spoke to *Saturday Tribune* on condition of anonymity said the bandits also abducted the wife and a child

of the slain village head.

"They fled the community when they realised that our men were getting close to their attack," he said.

He said it was the first time bandits attacked the village even though other neighbouring communities had suffered several attacks in recent time.

"We didn't know they would attack our community after invading some neighbouring communities many times. Our men came out in a large number to repel the attack on the community but they killed our village head and three others and ran away," the source said.

As of the time of this report, the state Police Public Relations Officer, Nafiu Abubakar, said he had not been briefed on the incident.