

Gunmen kidnap Catholic priest in Taraba

Troops conduct clearance operations in Anambra, Ebonyi, Imo, kill three

Terna Chikpa | Jalingo with agency report

GUNMEN, in the early hours of Sunday, invaded the Rectory of St. Ann's Parish, Sarkin Kudu in Ibi Local Government Area of Taraba State and abducted Reverend Father Thaddeus Tarhembe.

In a statement, the Director of Communication, Catholic Diocese of Wukari, Reverend Father John Jerome Laikei, on behalf of the Bishop, Most Reverend Mark Nzukwei, said the

priest was abducted at Reverend Fathers' Rectory of St. Ann's Parish, Sarkin Kudu, by gunmen who are yet to be identified.

Most Reverend Nzukwei then appealed to Nigerians of goodwill to pray for the safe release of the priest.

Meanwhile, troops of Operation Udo Ka II in the South-East have conducted clearance operation on terrorists' hideout in Orsumoghu forest in Ihiala Local Government Area of Anambra State.

During the operation, the troops killed two terrorists, the acting Deputy Director of Army Public

Relations, 82 Division, Lieutenant-Colonel Jonah Unuakhalu, stated on Saturday in Enugu.

According to the *News Agency of Nigeria (NAN)*, Lieutenant-Colonel Unuakhalu added that the clearance operation centred on suspected hideouts of the proscribed Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB) and its Eastern Security Network (ESN).

He stated that the terrorist group deployed improvised explosive devices (IEDs) to slow down troops, but the latter were undaunted.

"The troops were able to

dislodge the group, neutralised two of them, while others escaped with gunshot wounds.

"Items recovered from the camps included a pair of military boots, one military belt, five mobile phones, one binoculars, leather hand gloves and police head warmer.

"Others were one locally-made handheld IED and four locally-made IED launchers (Ogbunigwe)," he stated.

Unuakhalu added that troops of Sector 2 of Operation Udo KA II arrested a suspected gunrunner on Thursday while on a

search-and-rescue mission at Effium in Ohaukwu Local Government Area of Ebonyi State.

He said the suspected gunrunner, one Francis (63), was arrested in his house with 48 rounds of 7.62 mm special ammunition.

"Additionally, a suspected Effium militia in Ebonyi was arrested and he led troops to their hideout.

"Items recovered from the hideout were one AK-47 rifle, 20 rounds of 7.62 mm special ammunition and one AK-47 magazine.

"Both suspects are presently in troops' custody for further interrogation,"

he stated.

Unuakhalu also stated that troops of Naval Base, Oguta, under Operation Udo Ka II began Operation Iron Tete on Friday to flush out IPOB/ESN elements from Agwa community in Imo.

He added that during the operation, an identified member of the group, a known local gun fabricator nicknamed 'Packing Store' was neutralised.

He stated that items recovered during the operation were one pump-action rifle, one locally-made pistol and a head warmer with IPOB inscription.