

Troops killed 21 armed herdsmen in Benue –Military

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Nigerian Army. File photo

John Charles, Makurdi

The Force Commander, Operation Whirl Stroke, Major General Adeyemi Yekini, on Monday, said troops had killed 21 herdsmen between Benue and Nasarawa states in the last few weeks.

Ayeni also confirmed the death of a soldier and two others injured last Saturday along Gbamjimba-Akor-Tomata in the Guma Local Government Area of Benue State.

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The force commander, who briefed journalists on the activities of the Operation Whirl Stroke at the Tactical Air Command located along Gboko Road, Makurdi, said that 60 suspects had so far been arrested since the inception of the operation.

General Yekini, who said that troops carried out raid operations at Tse Akwaza in the Katsina Alla Local Government Area of Benue State last Saturday, hinted that there was the possibility that

troops had killed the most wanted terrorist in the state, Terwase Akwaza, aka 'Gana'.

“During the firefight, the Mi35 spotted a group of about 20 armed herdsmen riding on motorcycles moving along the axis towards Nasarawa State. Fifteen of the armed herdsmen on five motorcycles were neutralised with rocket fire from the Mi35 while others escaped with varying degrees of injury.

“Our troops chased the remaining herdsmen until contact was broken close to the boundary between Nasarawa and Benue states. Plans are in progress to conduct further clearance operations of the border areas between the two states.

“The first was on 4 August, 2018, when troops of Sector 2 with the headquarters at Tomata supported by the Air Force conducted clearing operation along Gbamjimba-Akor-Tomata axis when the troops made contact with armed militiamen moving with large herds of cattle. The troops dislodged the armed men from the camp with an unspecified number of them suspected to have been killed.

“Although no specific figure of casualty was officially given, troops who participated in the operation were of the opinion that not less than six of the armed men were killed during the fighting.

“The raid operation, which took place at Tse Akwaza camp belonging to Gana in Kastina-Ala commenced at about 0500hours on 18th August, 2018 through Jato Aka-Kashimbila-Tyotsar axis but was suspended due to bad terrain and damaged bridge at Tyotsar, which the troops could not cross due to flooding.

“It was not clear if Gana was killed during the assault, but a trail of blood seen in the building suspected to be where he slept suggested he might have been hit.

“A motorcycle usually used by Gana was also badly damaged during the air strike. Many sacks of a substance suspected to be Indian hemp were recovered and burnt, “General Yekini said.

The force commander said that troops had been able to recover seven automatic weapons from armed militiamen in the last six weeks adding that the modest achievement of the OPWS resulted in the gradual return of about 135,000 internally displaced persons to their homes and farmlands.