

Soldiers' inadequate commitment affecting insurgency war – Buratai

Published [June 19, 2019](#)

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Chief of Army Staff Lieutenant General Tukur Buratai

• Boko Haram attacks four military bases in one week

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The Chief of Army Staff, Lt. Gen. Tukur Buratai, has lamented that some officers and men's insufficient commitment is affecting the success of the counter-insurgency operations in the country.

Buratai who spoke on Tuesday at the opening of a five-day leadership workshop for mid-level officers and soldiers in Abuja, said the rising terrorist attacks were due to “insufficient commitment to a common national and military cause by those at the frontlines.”

The army chief noted that there were proven cases of soldiers unwilling to carry out assignments given to them, adding that reluctant troops should leave the service as the army would no longer tolerate them.

Buratai said, “It is unfortunate, but the truth is that almost every setback the Nigerian Army has had in our operations in recent times can be traced to insufficient willingness to perform assigned tasks or simply insufficient commitment to a common national and military course by those at the frontlines.

“Many of those on whom the responsibility for physical actions against the adversary squarely falls are yet to fully take ownership of our common national or service cause. And this is the reason why I have always ensured that the promotion of army personnel is essentially based on professional considerations only.

“But we all know that professional capacity is not a sufficient condition to succeed in a task; willingness to perform the task is equally necessary. We all know that leadership is core to military professionalism; hence all military professional courses include aspects of military leadership skills acquisition.”

Buratai added that an effect of modernisation, globalisation and Information and Communications Technology in the last decades had been the “decline in nationalistic enthusiasm.”

“Hence the theme of the workshop has been aptly chosen as ‘Lead, follow or get out of the way,’” he said.

B’Haram attacks four army bases in one week

Buratai’s allegations might not be far from the truth as Boko Haram fighters backed by the Islamic State West African Province have attacked at least four Nigerian Army bases between last Wednesday and Tuesday.

This has already been raising concerns among the troops of the Operation Lafiya Dole in the North-East.

The army has lost a yet-to-be-ascertained number of soldiers when Boko Haram fighters attacked its bases in the Mobbar, Damasak, Monguno and Gajiram areas of Borno State.

Also, the acting Director of Army Public Relations, Col. Sagir Musa, has yet to confirm the number of casualties in any of the attacks.

In the attacks on army bases by the insurgents within the last one week, ammunition worth at least N20m was carted away by the fighters.

On June 12, while the Democracy Day celebration was ongoing nationwide, Boko Haram insurgents attacked a military location at Kareto village in the Mobbar Local Government Area of Borno State.

The terrorists reportedly killed the Commanding Officer of 158 Battalion and an undisclosed number of soldiers.

On Saturday, June 15, Boko Haram terrorists attacked another troops' location in Damasak, Borno State, during which an unconfirmed number of soldiers were injured.

On Monday, the Boko Haram fighters attacked another military base in Monguno, Borno State, killing at least five soldiers.

The terrorists reportedly invaded the location in many utility vehicles in an attack, which occurred on Monday around 6pm.

Sources said before reinforcements came to Monguno, the terrorists had made away with the military's ammunition and set a section of the base on fire.

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On the same Monday, the terrorists in armoured trucks attacked another army base in Gajiram in the Nganzai LGA of the state.

A source said the terrorists were in the area for almost five hours and did not attack people who fled into the bushes or hid indoors.

Herdsmen attack Plateau, kill soldier, three others

Meanwhile, Fulani herdsmen killed 14 people, including a soldier, in separate attacks in Plateau, Taraba and Kaduna states.

In the Plateau attack, four people including a soldier, were confirmed dead when Fulani herdsmen attacked the Riyom Local Government Area of the state on Monday.

One of our correspondents in Plateau State gathered on Tuesday that an attack on the remote Kagboro community in the Riyom Local Government Area of the state took place at noon on Monday and lasted for many hours.

This, the residents said, accounted for the high level of destruction in the community.

Villagers said over 300 herdsmen, who stormed the village, shot sporadically and burnt houses including a government-owned clinic after they had overpowered the vigilantes who tried to resist the attackers.

The spokesman for the state Police Command, Tyopev Mathias, when contacted on Tuesday, promised to get back to one of our correspondents later over the incident.

“I will get back to you on the attack in Riyom, please,” Mathias told one of our correspondents in Jos on Tuesday.

However, the lawmaker representing the Riyom Constituency in the state House of Assembly, Mr Timothy Datong, confirmed the incident to one of our correspondents in Jos on Tuesday.

Datong, who condemned the incident, said he had concluded plans to raise the issue at the House of Assembly.

The lawmaker said, “I can confirm to you that four of our people including a security personnel were killed during the incident. Many were also wounded. We have also counted at least 54 houses that were completely burnt down by the attackers.

“It was the heavily armed Fulani people numbering over 300 that came to attack our people. I am going to present the issue as a matter of urgent public importance before the House of Assembly members when we reconvene because this thing cannot be allowed to continue.

“The invasion started around 12 noon on Monday and did not stop until more than four hours. I was in touch with the commander of the special task force in charge of security in the state and he assured me he was going to mobilise his men. I was surprised by the extent of destruction that eventually occurred in the community.”

However, the Plateau State House of Assembly on Tuesday set up a committee to review the crisis situation in the state and come up with ways on how to solve the problem.

The committee headed by the lawmaker representing Pankshin North Constituency, Mr Philip Peter, was set up in the wake of the latest gunmen attack in Riyom area of the state.

Datong, who confirmed the development, told one of our correspondents in Jos on Tuesday that the committee had four weeks to submit its report.

Herdsmen kill two children, one teenager in Kaduna

Also, three children were on Tuesday confirmed killed, following an attack by suspected Fulani herdsmen on Ungwan Rimi community in the Kauru Local Government Area of Kaduna State.

The Kaduna Police Command, while confirming the attack, said the incident took place around 2.45 pm on Monday.

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A source told one of our correspondents that the attackers invaded the community in a commando style, shooting intermittently at anyone in sight, killing no fewer than three children.

The three kids died on the spot while several others sustained varying degrees of injury.

The Kaduna State Police Command's Public Relations Officer, Yakubu Sabo, who confirmed the incident in a statement, gave the names of the children killed as Monday Yahaya, Samson David and Ashimile Danladi.

The statement read, "Information reaching us reveals that on June 17, 2019 at about 2.25pm, the Divisional Police Officer of Kauru Police Station, received a distress call that armed men entered Unguwan Rimi village, Chawai District of the Kauru LGA and started shooting sporadically and in the process shot dead one Monday Yahaya 8, Samson David 17, and Ashimile Danladi 9 years.

"Teams of policemen quickly moved to the area, evacuated the dead bodies to the hospital and ensured that the situation was brought under control.

"Preliminary investigations later revealed that the attack might not be unconnected with the attack of Fulani camp early in the morning of the same date in the area.

"However, efforts are on to apprehend the perpetrators and the command has intensified patrols and other proactive measures to forestall further breach of the peace in the area."

Herdsmen kill seven in Taraba

Meanwhile, herdsmen also attacked the Ardo Kola Local Government Area of Taraba State and killed seven people.

One of our correspondents in the state gathered that six people were killed in Janibanibu in Ardo Kola LGA near Jalingo when armed herdsmen invaded the village at about 6pm on Monday.

The Parish Priest of St. John the Baptist Pastoral Area, Rev. Fr. Cyriacus Kama, told The PUNCH on Tuesday that seven people were killed in the Janibanibu village by suspected Fulani herdsmen.

He said, "I am in Janibanibu village now. We have recovered seven dead bodies and we are making efforts to give them a mass burial with the support of the soldiers who are with us in the village.

"The situation is still very tense. Many houses have been burnt and there is threat of possible attack again by the armed Fulani militia who are threatening to attack Kona village."

A security man, who confided in The PUNCH, said seven people were killed in an ambush at the border between Tor-Damisa and Akate villages in the Donga Local Government Area of the state.

The security officer, who participated in the evacuation and burial of seven persons killed in the ambush, said seven corpses were recovered and buried on Tuesday.

The seven Tiv farmers killed in the attack were said to be on their way to their farms, weeks after they fled the area when they were first attacked. It was, however, not clear if the Tiv farmers were killed by herdsmen.

When contacted, the Police Public Relations Officer in the state, David Misal, told journalists that only five people were killed in the Janibanibu attack, while one person was killed in an attack around the Wukari-Donga border.

The Police Public Relations Officer said, “Five people were killed in the attack on Janibanibu near Jalingo. I am not aware of the killing of seven persons in Donga.

“The information I have indicates that there was an attack on a village in Donga and one person was killed,” he said.

Taraba women protest killings, say security agents shielding attackers

However, the killings in Taraba State led to a protest in Jalingo by women, who accused security agencies of shielding the attackers.

Hundreds of Kona women in the early hours of Tuesday at Jalingo, the state capital, protested the killing of their people by the Fulani herdsmen.

The protest came on the heels of killings of 11 people between Sunday and Monday night when suspected armed Fulani militia invaded Tudiri and Janibanibu villages in Ardo-Kola Local Government Area of the state.

The women, who started the protest from Kona village located six kilometres away from the city centre, wore black attire and marched across major streets of Jalingo “to protest continued attacks on our communities and killings of our husbands and children by armed Fulani herdsmen.”

One of the women, Mrs Mary Shaukani, who spoke to one of our correspondents during the protest, alleged that rather than going after the herdsmen who had been killing and destroying their homes, security agencies had been busy harassing and arresting Kona youths.

“Yesterday (Monday), soldiers and police arrested over seven of our sons who went out to defend our people.

“Rather than protect us, security agencies are shielding the attackers and arresting our youths. Many of our children are now in the detention of the security agencies.

“The response time is poor and that is why the crisis has led to the killing of scores of our people and the burning of our houses.

“We want our children released and the security agencies should be fair in handling the crisis,” she said.

But reacting to the allegations, the PPRO in the state, Misal, said the police had yet to receive any complaints from the women.

He stated, “We have not received any complaint from the women regarding the arrest of anyone. In any case, whoever that has been arrested has something to do with the crisis. We cannot sit down and watch people take the law into their own hands.

“Some youths block the road and were smashing people’s cars. In such a situation, we cannot sit and watch them unleash mayhem on innocent people,” he said.

Catholic bishop tells Buhari to quit

The Arewa Consultative Forum and the Archbishop of Kaduna Catholic Diocese, Rev Matthew Ndago-Manoso, have reacted to the spate of killings in the country.

Ndago-Manoso spoke to newsmen on the sidelines of the ongoing Annual General Meeting of the Nigeria Catholic Diocese Priests' Association taking place at the Catholic Social Centre, Kaduna.

He urged President Muhammadu Buhari to resign if he lacked the capacity to govern.

The cleric said since his ordination 33 years ago, he had yet to know any regime as bad as the current All Progressives Congress government led by Buhari.

The cleric said, “In governance if you know you don't have the capacity to even rule a local government, don't put yourself forward. The very fact that you put yourself forward, you are telling the people that you have the capacity and the know-how.

“Now talking about the present government, I think the simple question that every Nigerian should ask is – my life today and my life before this government came in, what is the difference? Go to the streets and ask Nigerians, four years on, how is your life compared to before.”

ACF seeks FG, states' cooperation

However, the pan-northern socio-political organisation, the Arewa Consultative Forum, said both the federal and state governments must make conscious efforts at putting an end to persistent killings and banditry in the North.

The National Publicity Secretary of the ACF, Alhaji Muhammad Ibrahim-Biu, in a statement in Kaduna, insisted that the Federal Government, states, security agencies, traditional rulers as well as religious leaders should synergise to end banditry in the North and other parts of the country.