

Troops kill 26 bandits in Katsina, Zamfara, recover four AK-47 rifles

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File: Army

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Troops of the Nigerian Army attached to *Operation Hadarin Daji* have shot dead 26 bandits during separate encounters in the Jibia Local Government Area of Katsina State and Maru LGA of Zamfara State.

According to the military on Saturday, the troops encountered the bandits on Thursday while responding to a distress call on the movement of bandits with rustled animals within Gurbin Magarya, Kwari and Garin Gado villages of Jibia LGA.

The troops shot dead 24 of the bandits and afterwards recovered four AK-47 rifles, two locally-made pistols and three dane guns.

In the Maru LGA, two bandits were killed in Bindim and Koli towns while the troops also recovered 17 rounds of 7.62 mm.

The Acting Director, Defence Media Operations of the Defence Headquarters, Brig Gen Benard Onyeuko, said, “The troops of *Operation Hadarin Daji* acting on credible intelligence invalidated two bandits in Bindim and Koli towns of Maru.

“In the same vein, troops while on patrol at Gando rescued seven males and two females kidnapped by bandits. The victims have been handed over to their families. Also, about 42 cows and 38 sheep were recovered. Troops are currently dominating the area with patrols which have helped to build confidence of locals.

“Similarly, troops responded to a distress call on the movement of bandits with rustled animals within Gurbin Magarya, Kwari and Garin Gado villages of Jibia Local Government Area of Katsina State.

“In the course of operation, 24 bandits were killed in action; four AK-47 rifles, two locally-made pistols and three dane guns were recovered.”

Sunday PUNCH learnt that over 40 bandits’ camps were destroyed in Zamfara and other neighbouring states of Sokoto, Kebbi and Katsina.

Zamfara State Commissioner for Security and Home Affairs, Alhaji Abubakar Dauran, told journalists on Saturday that “coordinated military operations are currently taking place in various parts of Zamfara and neighbouring states where the bandits are finding it difficult to survive.”

Meanwhile, the police in Katsina on Saturday said they had recovered seven corpses of suspected bandits from Shabba forest in the Jibia Local Government Area of the state.

The bandits sustained varying degrees of injury during a gun duel with joint a team comprising the police and military inside the forest on Thursday.

The Police Public Relations Officer in the state, SP Gambo Isah, who confirmed the development on Saturday, said the security team was still combing the forest for other suspected bandits.

He said, “You will recall that on March 19, 2020 around 6am, a joint police/military operation engaged suspected bandits in a gun duel at Shabba Forest, Jibia Local Government Area. In the process, 19 cows, 17 sheep and 34 goats in custody of the criminals were recovered. Many of the bandits were killed while others escaped with gunshots wounds.

“Today (Saturday), the Divisional Police Officer, Jibia, led search parties into Shabba Forest and recovered seven additional corpses of suspected bandits killed during the encounter with the joint security forces.

“The team is still combing the forest to arrest the bandits and recover more corpses and operational weapons. Investigation is ongoing.”

Since the beginning of the year, banditry and killings had resumed in the North-West region with major attacks recorded in Katsina, Niger, Kaduna and Zamfara states.

The bandits built camps in the Walawa, Yadi and Kuduru areas of Kaduna State, from where they launched attacks on surrounding communities.

The Nigerian Air Force last week also began air strikes on the bandits’ camps, killing five commanders of the bandits, known as the Ansaru group, and scores of bandits were killed during several special operations. The air force said its operation against the bandits, conducted in coordination with the Nigeria Police Force and other security agencies, is targeted at destroying the logistic supplies of the bandits during joint air and ground operations.

As parts of efforts to also stem the banditry ravaging the country, the Chief of the Defence Staff, Gen Abayomi Olonisakin, said in the first week of March that the military deployed more troops to the North-Central and North-West regions of the country to tackle the banditry attacks.

The CDS added that Nigerians must be patient with the military as the armed forces were not sleeping over the insecurity in the country, noting that efforts to curb the menace were ongoing.

“In the North-West, we have our troops there fighting banditry. In the North-Central, they are fighting cultism and kidnapping. We have them in the South-South and South-West. Nigerians should understand that we are not sleeping. We are doing our best and we will ensure that peace returns to every region of this country,” Olonisakin said.