

Bandits on the rampage, attack air force patrol in Zamfara, Kogi Assembly

SOLOMON ODENTU,
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SUSPECTED bandits were on the rampage during the week, attacking at least three different institutions in the country: the Kogi State House of Assembly Complex, Obasanjo Akoka University of Science and Technology, Oshilepa, Ondo State, and the Nigerian Air Force in Zamfara State.

In Zamfara State, bandits on Monday attacked a patrol team of Operation Hardin Dayi, comprising operatives of the Nigerian Air Force and Police Special Forces, in the Bunkuru area of the state.

An encounter between the troops and the bandits left two security operatives, a police inspector and a NAF operative identified as James Olaya dead. Seven bandits were also reportedly killed during the gun duel.

Earlier, PUNCH learnt that the incident occurred at a time the military was on alert after a report by the President, Major General Muhammadu Buhari (rtd), to curtail the activities of bandits in the state was sent to him.

Olaya's family and friends have since taken to social media to mourn him.

His brother, Momo Olaya, who posted the picture of the deceased, wrote, "Why now, brother? You never planned to let go in such a hard way. (You are) always in our heart. Kid brother, Rest on."

Another family member simply identified as Paul also wrote on Facebook, "Come too soon, my own James Ambarabibhem Eteyoga Olaya."

Meanwhile, one of Olaya's relatives, who spoke on condition of anonymity, said a military officer close to the family first broke the news to him.

The relative claimed that the commander of the deceased's unit later called to commiserate with the bereaved family.

The source said, "On Thursday, I got a call from someone who claimed to be the deceased's commander. He asked after my well-being and asked if I heard what happened to my brother. I told him I heard. He then said, 'Take heart, I am sorry. May his soul rest in peace.' I lit my phone against the floor and began to weep."

The deceased was a young man. He had been the pillar of our family ever since we lost our parents. He joined the Air Force to feed for the family. One of my brothers met me crying. He picked up the phone and called the commander.

"He didn't tell me much about

was that we should go in Africa. I called the commander's number on Friday with the elders of the family being present to get information on how he died. The commander said I should call back but since then we have not been able to talk."

When contacted, the Director of Public Relations and Information, NAF, Air Commodore Edward Gbalewa, confirmed that a patrol team of Operation Hardin Dayi was attacked by bandits at Bunkuru in Zamfara State.

Gbalewa said the troops killed seven bandits but lost two personnel, including a NAF operative.

He said, "There was an attack on the NAF base in Zamfara State. Indeed, a patrol team of Operation Hardin Dayi, comprising members of the armed forces and Police Special Forces, came under attack by bandits at Bunkuru."

"As usual, our troops reacted off the attack and killed several bandits. Sadly, we lost one of our gallant men and a police inspector."

Meanwhile, Gbalewa debunked reports that armed men attacked the Air Force base in Kaduna on Sunday.

He said this in a statement titled, "No attempted attack on NAF base in Kaduna."

The statement read, "Merchants of fake news are at it again. This time round, their focus is on the premier Nigerian Air Force base in Kaduna, which they claimed came under terrorist attack in the early hours of June 26, 2021."

"Members of the public should please disregard the news as it is entirely false. There was nothing

of such as the inhabitants of the centre base are going about their normal business without any threat whatsoever."

Rebuking Saturday's attacks, the Nigerian Army said troops of Division 8 neutralised several suspected bandits in Oshilepa, Ondo State.

The army said the bandits and troops engaged in a fierce gun battle during their patrol along Maruiche-Daga, Kure, and Fagunmu villages in Oshilepa.

In a statement, the Director of Army Public Relations, Oyejide Nwankubwa, said troops also killed five bandits and injured others in a separate operation in Bunkuru in Zamfara State.

The statement was titled, "Nigerian Army troops neutralise scores of bandits in Oshilepa encounter, neutralise suspected bandits."

It read, "In the fierce encounter that ensued, the bandits were overwhelmed by the superior firepower of the troops."

This led to scores of bandits being neutralised. The troops also recovered one PIST rifle, long-range of communication, and a motorcycle."

Following the report, the bandits were neutralised in another encounter at Bunkuru, in the Bunkuru Local Government Area of Zamfara State. During the gun duel, the bandits withdrew in disarray, having sustained seven gunshot wounds. The patrol troops recovered one AK-47 rifle, one motorcycle, and three mobile phones from the neutralised criminals."

Bandits invade Kogi House of Assembly

In a related development, bandits on Friday invaded the Kogi State House of Assembly Complex and carried away property worth millions of naira.

The Speaker of the Kogi House of Assembly, Mr. Matthew Kibanda, who confirmed the incident in an interview with one of our correspondents, said some armed bandits invaded the Assembly on Friday and made away with armoured cables, TV sets and other office valuables.

Kibanda expressed concern over the development, saying that the bandits' invasion had exposed the power security at the complex.

"Security men stationed to the Assembly Complex should sit up in the discharge of their duty to ensure that the disruption of power is not a threat to the protection of lives and property at the House of Assembly Complex," the Speaker warned.

Kibanda appealed to the security agencies in the state to ensure arrest of those who invaded the Assembly to avert future occurrences.

He, however, expressed joy that no life was lost during the attack.

Omo university shut as hoodlums rob, rape students

Meanwhile, the management of the Obasanjo Akoka University of Science and Technology, Oshilepa, Ondo State has ordered the closure of the institution for two weeks following the spate of insecurity on the campus.

The development followed a protest embarked upon by the students last Thursday to register their displeasure over the increasing robberies at their hostel, rape of female students by hoodlums, and threats to their lives and property.

to return the children, did we collect a single naira? Did anyone give us anything?"

"So, if I give my word to a person, if the person rejects or accepts it, it's fine. I don't care. I can only say this: no love exists between me and those people across the road to the North. Everyone knows, I have no business with them. My boys don't operate along Jaja, where they kill innocent people. We don't kill innocent people."

It was not clear if Dandaram's claim of some children was in reference to 40 children kidnapped alongside two others from a school in Niger State in May 2021.

For the past five years, the northwestern part of Nigeria has become engulfed by attacks carried out by bandits, who have carried out vicious attacks on local communities, killing scores of people, and kidnapping as many as they can for ransom.

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A source told one of our correspondents that about four female students were raped by hoodlums in the last two weeks.

The President of the Students' Union, Government, Dandaram Chikima, confirmed the raping of some students, saying they were tired of the level of insecurity in the school environment.

Apart from the rape of female students at gunpoint, Chikima also said many students had been depressed at their robberies such as phones, laptops, and other gadgets.

He said, "We are tired of insecurity. Hoodlums usually come to our off-campus hostels, rob students at gunpoint, and rape our female students."

The school management is not doing enough as we are the ones securing ourselves by working as vigilantes most times. The situation is terrible."

"We urge the school management to do its best in securing us and complete all the uncompleted hostel accommodation on the campus."

However, in a reaction, the Dean of Student Affairs, OAI/STEC, Mr. Nwankwo Ogunmodin, stated that the school management was doing its best to secure the lives and property of the students.

Similarly, the university's Public Relations Officer, Mr. Abdulazeez Adetayo, said the school had already taken steps to ensure the safety of the students' lives and property.

He said, "It is true that the students staged a peaceful protest, and the school has been shut. The management will be meeting with

all the traditional rulers and other stakeholders in the communities near the students' quarters."

"In less than two weeks, the school will organise a security summit that will involve all the stakeholders in the area."

Destiny terrorists' enclaves, COAS changes troops

Meanwhile, the Chief of Army Staff, Major General Paulu Yakubu, had changed troops of Sector 3 Light Task Force Jamb, Jamb, replacing Haden Kid to destroy all Boko Haram and Islamic State West Africa Province's enclaves in their various locations.

According to a statement by the Director of Army Public Relations, Nwankubwa, the COAS stated this while addressing troops in Yola State on Sunday.

The statement was titled, "Destiny all Boko Haram enclaves in year locations, COAS changes troops in Yola."

It read in part, "General Yakubu further commended the troops on the several successful operations conducted within Sector 3 area of responsibility, which he commended in his address to the troops in Yola State on Sunday."

He applauded the troops in use their wealth of experience and lessons learnt from the series of operations to destroy the remnants of marauding terrorists within their various locations.

"He assured them of improved welfare and a new reward system for troops who perform gallantly in any operation."

Zamfara bandit boasts about exploits in trending video

JOHN ALECHIBU

In a video which went viral on Saturday, a notorious bandit operating within the precincts of Zamfara boasted about his exploits and exploits against the Nigerian military.

The bandit, identified as Dandaram (meaning Small in Hausa), was seen holding a rifle while surrounded by a crowd and granting an interview to some persons.

In the video which lasted four minutes and 40 seconds, the dandaram-wearing bandit was seen boasting about some of his exploits, especially ambushes against military convoys.

It was not clear when the video was shot but it is believed to have been shot a few months ago.

The anonymous video is believed to have been taken in Zamfara forest, where Dandaram holds sway.

they ambushed my brothers who were bringing my supplies and seized their motorcycles. They joined forces with Niger State. I dealt with them. I'm still here till tomorrow."

No one can arrest me unless I let them. Whatever they (my boys) want to do, they won't do until I say so. The other day, they went to Zamfara and kidnapped children, small children. I was sleeping at home; they said there were 40 people. I took them back. Since our parents pleaded with us

Exclusive: I don't want to die, alleged killer of Super TV CEO cries out

DESI LAMBO

While investigation still ongoing into the circumstances surrounding the death of the Chief Executive Officer, Super TV, Usio Akpa, the prime suspect, Chikima Ojukwu, during an exclusive interview with Sunday PUNCH on Saturday, said

the police, Chikima said she met the late Akpa about four months ago. Chikima also said that she and Akpa were "having fun" when an argument broke out and she stabbed him twice after which she withdrew N550,000 from his account using his ATM card.

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Zamfara, Kaduna, and Kuchina states are the epicentres of the growing crisis.

In the first half of 2020 alone, at least 1,126 people were killed by bandits in northern Nigeria, according to Amnesty International.

In the last six months, hundreds of students have also been kidnapped in at least five separate incidents. In some cases, students have been killed by their kidnappers even after ransoms were paid.

(sr). I have met him up to four or five times; he takes drugs and drinks alcohol. It is not that I am trying to put anything together."

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