

Buhari, Zulum mourn general, 11 others killed in ISWAP ambush

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A Nigerian Army general, a major, a lieutenant and nine other soldiers were on Saturday killed in an attack by Islamic State West Africa Province fighters in Askira town, in the Askira Uba Local Government Area of Borno State.

The military officers were said to have been killed in an ambush while trying to provide reinforcement for the troops.

The attack, which began in the early hours of Saturday, was said to have lasted for several hours, leaving many civilians dead.

According to sources, the ISWAP terrorists attacked the town, which is the hometown of Borno State House of Assembly deputy speaker, with 12 gun trucks, four of which were burnt down by troops of the Nigerian military.

"They came to the town in 12 gun trucks and mounted them at strategic locations to give them an edge over the Nigerian forces," a source in Uba told to Sunday PUNCH.

Meanwhile, the Nigerian Army has confirmed the killing of Brigadier-General Dzarma Zirkusu in a fierce battle with terrorists of the Islamic State of West African Province ISWAP on Saturday.

Zirkusu was the commander of 28 Task Force Brigade, Chibok.

In a statement by the Director of Army Public Relations, Brigadier General Onyema Nwachukwu, it said Zirkusu and the three soldiers paid the "supreme sacrifice in a very rare display of gallantry" in a counteroffensive against the terrorists.

It, however, said the troops killed many members of ISWAP during the encounter in Askira, which borders Sambisa Forest.

ISWAP has been fighting against the Nigerian armed forces since it split from Boko Haram five years ago and pledged allegiance to the Islamic State.

The insurgents attacked Askira on Saturday morning with at least 12 gun trucks, setting houses and shops on fire and forcing some residents to scamper to safety, AFP reported.

In April, the army said a senior ISWAP commander, Bukar Gana Fitchmeram (aka Abu Aisha), and scores of his fighters, who were on a revenge mission at Damasak, were killed as they attempted a reprisal following the killing of 12 high-value ISWAP commanders in the Mobbar Local Government Area of the state in a week-long air and ground operations by its troops.

In September, it said its troops neutralised two ISWAP/Boko Haram insurgents during a counter-attack against the terrorists who attempted to gain access into Babangida community in the Tarmuwa Local Government Area of Yobe State to loot to restock.

In October, it said troops of Joint Task Force North East Operation Hadin Kai deployed alongside Cameroonian Defence Force foiled an infiltration by terrorists on its camp at the Forward Operating Base, Wulgo, Borno, killing four members of ISWAP.

However, the statement by the army read in part, "Sadly, a gallant senior officer Brigadier General Dzarma Zirkusu, his 2IC and eight other soldiers were killed in a very rare display of gallantry

as they provided reinforcement in a counter offensive against the terrorists, and successfully defended the location.

Troops of Joint Task Force, North East Operation HADIN KAI have neutralized several Islamic State West Africa Province terrorists during a recent encounter in Askira Uba Local Government Area of Borno State.

"In the fierce encounter which is still raging as at the time of filing this report, troops supported by the Air Component of OPHK have destroyed five A-Jet, two A-29, two Dragon combat vehicles and nine gun trucks."

"Sadly, a gallant senior officer, Brigadier General Dzarma Zirkusu, and three soldiers paid the supreme sacrifice in a very rare display of gallantry as they provided reinforcement in a counteroffensive against the terrorists, and successfully defended the location. The family of the senior officer and soldiers have been contacted," the statement titled, 'Operation Hadin Kai: Troops neutralise several ISWAP terrorists, destroy equipment in Uba encounter,' added.

Nwachukwu said the Chief of Army Staff, Lt Gen Faruk Yahaya, commiserated with the families and relations of the deceased soldiers.

He added that he had directed the troops to continue in the ferocious counteroffensive and hot pursuit to eliminate the remnant of the fleeing terrorists.

The Nigerian Army on Saturday said a senior officer, Brigadier General Dzarma Zirkusu, and three soldiers were killed in an operation by troops of Operation Hadin Kai against Islamic State West Africa Province members in Borno State.

Buhari, Zulum mourn
Meanwhile, the President, Major General Muhammadu Buhari (retd.) and the Borno State Governor, Prof Babagana Zulum, have condoled with the military over the death of the soldiers.

Buhari has said he was saddened to hear about the death of the general and three soldiers who paid the supreme sacrifice in a rare display of gallantry as they tried to help their compatriots in the war against terrorists.

The President, in a statement by his Senior Special Assistant on Media and Publicity, Garba Shehu, titled 'President Buhari, nation mourn martyred general', said, "Nigeria has lost brave soldiers. I salute their courage. May their souls rest in peace. General Zirkusu leaves us sad and devastated. The soldier in him will remain immortal. I pray to the Almighty to give you and the bereaved families the strength and courage to bear this irreparable loss."

On his part, Zulum commended the Nigerian military for its resilience in a battle with the terrorist group.

In a statement by his spokesman, Malam Isa Gusau, the governor while commiserating with the military over the loss of some military officers, thanked the fallen heroes for what he called "their supreme sacrifices to the Nigerian nation," adding that "the people of Borno will remain forever grateful to them and all fallen heroes, and will remain fully supported of gallant troops currently operating in front lines".

The governor also commiserated with the residents affected by the attack.

"Today's unfortunate incident in Askira Uba Local Government Area reminds us that while our military, other armed forces, volunteers and all stakeholders make combined severe efforts

towards peace-building; while many insurgents surrender their arms to toe the path of peace and while reclaimed communities witness return of peace and access to livelihoods, some insurgents

are hell-bent on ensuring we do not fully regain peace.

"The goal of these categories of insurgents should challenge us to remain focused and ceaselessly commit ourselves to support our

troops in many ways, particularly with logistics on the part of the government, and with credible information and prayers on the part of all of us as people of Borno State."

Zamfara APC holds parallel congresses

MAIHARAJI ALTINE

The Zamfara State chapter of the All Progressive Congress has conducted a parallel congress in the state.

But a former governor, Abdul Aziz Yari, urged his supporters to boycott the exercise.

This is as a former senator representing Zamfara Central in the National Assembly, Senator Kabiru Marafa, conducted a parallel congress where new executive members of the party were elected.

The national headquarters of the party had sent delegates, under the chairmanship of Ibrahim Kabir Masari, to conduct a congress in the state after it was rescheduled several times due to lingering crises between Governor Bello Matawalle and Yari's supporters.

Addressing members of the party at Government House

Gusau before the commencement of the congress, Masari said, "the national headquarters of the party has approved the conduct of the congress in Zamfara state."

Masari said the congress was approved by the national headquarters of the party, stressing that it did not violate the constitutional provision of the party.

"We are in the state to organise the congress based on our party's constitution. I am calling on all members to respect the party and join the congress."

Masari also warned that the party would not recognise any parallel elections apart from the one he was sent to supervise.

"I am calling on all members of our great party to participate in the congress if they want to be recognised as bona fide members of the party. Anybody who fails to participate in this congress is

not loyal to APC and is not its member," he added.

Marafa, through his spokesperson, Alhaji Bello Bakayauwa, said the congress conducted by his faction was genuine.

He said, "Today (Saturday), we have successfully conducted our ward congress into 147 elected ward chairmanship positions across the state. This congress was conducted parallel with the Governor Matawalle-led faction of the party."

"I, therefore, wish to clearly state that our ward congress is genuine, legal, constitutional, democratic, and in accordance with our dear party's constitution. Permit me to use this opportunity to restate our unyielding support to our party executives who could not join us today because of the court case at their disposal."

"We truly appreciate their

concern and commitment to APC Marafa/Yari's faction of Zamfara state. I also wish to state that the elected excons of Marafa/Yari's faction are bona fide members of APC. We will not accept any ward leaders of the party arising from the faction of Governor Matawalle because we are fully convinced that no congress was democratically conducted on their part."

Still dissatisfied with the arrangements, Yari had urged his supporters not to participate in any of the congresses.

In a letter signed by the Publicity Secretary of the Yari APC faction, Alhaji Ibrahim Magaji, the former governor called on his supporters to boycott the congresses because of a pending court case.

It read in part, "We will not participate in the congress because there is a pending court's action which ruled that we shall maintain the status quo."



•L-R: Country Director, PanAfricare, Dr Patrick Adah; Advisor, ExxonMobil Foundation, Mrs Tawhida Zayyad; Acting Secretary/Director of Administration and Finance Education Secretariat, FCT, Mallam Leremoh Abdurazaq; Director of Basketball Operations, NBA Africa, Mr Kita Mutungulu; and Director, Co-Curricular Secondary Education Board, FCT, Hajia Fatima Gambo-Baba, during 8th anniversary of power forward in Abuja... on Saturday. Photo: Olatunji Obasa

Pay special constables salary, PCRC begs community leaders

DAUD OLATUNJI

THE Police Community Relations Committee in Ogun State has appealed to community leaders to take up the responsibility of paying the salary and other remunerations of the special constables deployed for community policing in the state.

The State Chairman, PCRC, Chief Samson Popoola, who made the appeal at the investiture of High Chief Olumide Aderinokun as the Ogun State PCRC patron, said community policing was a volunteer job.

The Force Public Relations Officer, Frank Mba, had said that the Nigeria Police Force would not be placed on a salary but would be given stipends.

However, Popoola urged community leaders in the state to encourage the volunteers with the payment of salary as part of efforts to support the fight against insecurity.

He explained that the special constables were given police uniforms to confirm identities by the government.

Popoola, however, urged community leaders to support security agencies to fight insecurity

in the state.

He said, "It is very clear from the beginning that police constabularies are supposed to be volunteers. That is why those

people that are recruited must be gainfully employed. They will only give their time and they are supposed to work within their communities.

"That is the essence of community

policing; it is not as if we are recruiting new policemen but we want community people to be engaged and to be part of that community policing."

Police arrest man for raping two sisters in Delta community

DELE OGUNYEMI

A 35-year-old man has been arrested by the Delta State Police Command for allegedly raping two sisters.

The suspect, Jude Nduka, resident on Obi Onuwa Street, behind Kowen Plaza, Asaba, Delta State, was said to have raped and impregnated one of the girls, aged 16, and defiled the other aged 13.

It was learnt that the mother of the victims had on November 10, 2021, approached the Delta State Police Command, Eagle-net Special Squad, with a complaint against Nduka.

The commander of the squad was said to have detailed detectives to investigate the incident, leading to the arrest of the suspect.

The state Police Public Relations Officer, DSP Bright Edge, said the suspect confessed to the crime following interrogation and a medical examination of the said

victims. Edge told our correspondent that the suspect, who is currently

in custody, would be charged to court on completion of the ongoing investigation.

HYPPADEC bemoans disease outbreak in Kwara communities

TUNDE OYEKOLA

THE Hydroelectric Power Producing Areas Commission on Saturday raised the alarm over the prevalence of water-borne diseases and others in riverine areas of Kwara state.

The commission attributed the challenge to the shortage of potable water in the affected communities.

Its Managing Director, Alhaji Abubakar Yelwa, said this in Ilorin, the state capital, during a stakeholders' meeting with residents from different communities.

Yelwa, however, said the commission would provide motorised and hand-pump boreholes to address the problem in

the communities.

He further said it was collaborating with the National Directorate of Employment to train 980 Kwara youths in one year, adding that the training would focus on poultry and fish farming, furniture making, and others.

He said, "The training will centre on poultry, fish farming, furniture making, etc. It is going to be about 55 trades for every youth to choose from. When the youth are under training we are going to support them with stipends adding that graduates would receive N15,000 per month while diploma holders and others will receive N10,000 monthly. This will at least help them to go to the training centres."