

Police blame poor intelligence as fleeing Zamfara terrorists kill 40 Taraba vigilantes

Tyopuusu Justin 15 January 2022

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Zamfara State Commissioner of Police Ayuba Elkanah

The Police have blamed the killing of scores of vigilantes by suspected terrorists in the Gassol Local Government Area of Taraba State on poor intelligence sharing.

It was gathered that no fewer than 40 vigilantes were reportedly killed in a gun duel between the vigilante group of Fulani disciplinary committee and the Tabita Pulako and fleeing terrorists from Zamfara, Sokoto and Katsina states.

An unconfirmed number of terrorists were also said to have been killed.

Our correspondent also gathered that many vigilantes were injured in the encounter which happened on Tuesday at Karal forest in the Gassol Local Government Area of Taraba State.

But when contacted, the Police Public Relations Officer, DSP Usman Abdullahi, who confirmed the incident, said, "Since the police attached to them (vigilantes) were not available, they were supposed to wait and get reinforcement from the police and the military before proceeding.

"It is unfortunate that the incident happened and many lives were lost. For us to succeed in the fight against crime, we must share intelligence and work together."

A resident, Mallam Nasiru Umar Gassol, told our correspondent that the terrorists had been camping in the forest for months, but only started kidnapping people a few weeks ago.

“We are aware of their presence in the forest and I want to believe that security agencies are aware of their camp in the area. Just recently, they kidnapped two Fulani – one from Maraban Gassol, the other from Tella – and a huge amount of money was paid to them (terrorists) as ransom before they were released.

“Following this development, the local vigilantes mobilised to go and flush them out of the forest, but unfortunately, the informants of the terrorists alerted them and they quickly mobilised and ambushed the vigilantes, killing no fewer than 40 of them,” Nasiru revealed.

Another resident added that a gun battle between the terrorists and the vigilantes forced residents of Karal, Badija and Karbawi to flee the area to Mutum-Biyu for safety.

A former chairman of Miyetti Allah Cattle Breeders Association of Nigeria in the State, Alhaji Mafindi Danburam, confirmed the incident to journalists but said the casualty figure had yet to be ascertained.

According to him, the vigilance group of the Fulani disciplinary committee and that of Pulako, acting on intelligence that there was a camp in the Karal area of the Gassol Local Government Area housing terrorists, mobilised to go and flush them but were ambushed and killed.

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Danburam said, “The actual number of victims has yet to be ascertained as many people are still missing. The mission of the Fulani vigilantes and Pulako was to flush out the criminals from their hideout in the Karal forest.

“They have succeeded in flushing criminals in two camps in the Bali Local Government Area and they were on a similar mission to flush out those terrorists in Gassol.”

He, however, blamed the incident on “the lack of backing from the state government”.

“We have written several correspondences and sent text messages to the government without any response. If the government had supported our efforts and attached 10 policemen and soldiers to be with the vigilantes on the patrol to flush out criminals, the casualties would not have been that much,” he said.

“We want to call on the Federal Government to help us. These terrorists from Zamfara are now in Taraba State. They fought people in the Kanan and Wase areas of Plateau and have now crossed to Taraba.

“We are appealing to the Federal Government because the Fulani are at the receiving end of these criminal activities. Daily, our people are selling their cows and paying N20m, N25m as ransom in the bush. Even the people living in town are not spared.

“These terrorists are mounting roadblocks and are kidnapping people for ransom. We are appealing to the Federal Government to assist security agencies and vigilantes to flush out these terrorists. We will not allow Taraba to be like

Katsina, Zamfara, Sokoto, Kebbi and Niger,” Danburam added.

Governor Darius Ishaku last December raised the alarm that terrorists were regrouping in the state and warned traditional rulers not to harbour them as those flouting his orders risked sacking.

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