

# Many killed as soldiers clash with bandits in Plateau

JAMES ABRAHAM

**M**ANY were feared killed on Saturday as bandits and soldiers clashed in the Mangu Local Government Area of Plateau State.

It was learnt that the hoodlums were on their way to attack an unknown village at about 7:30 am following the relaxation of the 24-hour curfew in the area when they were confronted by soldiers along Gindiri Road leading to the death of many of them.

The Chairman of Mangu, Marcus Artu, confirmed the development to Sunday PUNCH in Jos on Saturday but could not give the casualty figures.

He said, "What I was told was that some attackers came out in large numbers this morning (Saturday) and wanted to attack the people but the soldiers repelled them. As for the number of attackers killed by the soldiers, I can not tell you because I don't have the information yet."

But a resident of Mangu, Philip Jato, told our correspondent that many of the bandits were killed during the confrontation while several others were apprehended

by the security forces.

Jato said, "I can confirm to you that many of the gunmen were killed by the soldiers. Some of them were also taken into custody."

"I was told that those killed were up to 30. Some people also told me that those apprehended were more than 40, but I can not say which one is the correct figure but the situation is calm now though people are still living in fear."

Meanwhile, the Chief of Army Staff, Lt. Gen. Taoreed Lagbaja, has urged troops of Operation Hakorin Damisa to immediately bring an end to the menace of insecurity in the state.

Speaking on Saturday in an interview with journalists during his tour of the troubled area, Lagbaja expressed confidence in the ability of his men to stop the incessant attacks, particularly in Mangu.

He said, "In the past week, we have experienced another round of violence here in Mangu and I have had a chat with your commander about the security situation on the Plateau, especially in Mangu."

"As soldiers, your focus is on one thing: stamp out the criminality and violence once and for all as I will not come back here except to go to the field myself."