

Villagers plan mass burial for bandits killed in supremacy battle

Maiharaji Altine, Gusau

SCORES of bandits have been killed as a result of a heavy fight between two rival groups around Hayin Alhaji and Munhaye forest in the Tsafe Local Government Area in Zamfara State.

A local, Mohammed Sanda, told *The PUNCH* on Sunday that the two bandit groups engaged in a supremacy fight last Saturday where scores lost their lives.

Sanda said villagers found several dead bodies at the scene of the fight and had started considering a mass burial for the dead bandits.

"We may dig a big grave and bury the dead bodies before they decompose," he said.

According to Sanda, a group of bandits from neighbouring Katsina State invaded some communities in Zamfara State with the intention of kidnapping the residents.

But the powerful and notorious bandits' kingpin, Ado Alero, who is an indigene of the area, intervened and refused to allow the rival bandit group to kidnap the villagers.

The two rival groups engaged in a gun battle which resulted in the death of several bandits from both sides.

He said the people of the area trooped to the battleground to see the dead bodies of the neutralised bandits.

According to him, there were over 20 motorcycles abandoned by the bandits at the place where the fight took place.

He said, "Some bandits who came from Katsina State invaded some communities between Tafkin Kazai and

Munhaye village around five o'clock in the evening of last Saturday, trying to abduct the residents of the area.

"While they were in the area, another group of bandits led by Ado Alero came to the place in a bid to protect the residents.

"The two bandit groups exchanged hot words and finally began to shoot at each other, while the residents ran helter-skelter for their dear lives.

"As we were running, the bandits' leader Ado Alero told us not to panic and asked us to remain where we were.

"The two groups fought for several hours where many of them were killed and when we returned to the area early morning of today, Sunday, we saw many corpses and several motorcycles.

•Continued on www.punchng.com

Food smuggling: Customs to man 1,500 illegal routes with drones

Okechukwu Nnodim and Adeyinka Adedipe

IN a move to tighten the noose on food smugglers, the Nigeria Customs Service has deployed drones and more operatives to restrict the diversion of foodstuff to neighbouring countries through about 1,500 identified illegal border crossings.

The National Public Relations Officer of Customs, Abdullahi Maiwada, confirmed to *The PUNCH* on Sunday that the NCS had increased its presence across the borders, including the illegal routes.

The development, he added,

was in compliance with the Presidential directive to the security agencies to stop the smuggling of food out of the country as part of decisive measures to stem the food crisis in the country.

Amid the falling value of the naira, traders who deal in grains have been taking grains and other staples to Niger Republic, Chad and Cameroon for higher profits.

But this had driven up the prices of food in Nigeria, resulting in protests by citizens and attacks on food trucks by desperate citizens in some states.

Worried by the situation, President Bola Tinubu directed

the National Security Adviser, the Inspector-General of Police and the Director, Department of State Services to go after food hoarders and smugglers.

The government ruled out the importation of food as part of strategies to address the high costs of foodstuffs and the economic hardship troubling the country.

Following the directive, dozens of food trucks leaving the country had been intercepted and sent back.

Giving an update on the measures against food hoarding and smuggling, the NCS spokesman, Maiwada, explained that the deployment of drones was under the Trade Modernisation Project of the