

COAS warns criminals as troops kill Zamfara terror kingpin

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Chief of Army Staff, Lieutenant General Olufemi Oluyede. Photo: Nigerian Army

| By Solomon Odeniyi

The Chief of Army Staff, Lt Gen Olufemi Oluyede, has issued a stern warning to terrorists and other criminal elements threatening Nigeria's security, declaring that their defeat is inevitable and their threats hold no weight.

His warning came as troops of Operation Fasan Yama neutralised a notorious terror kingpin, identified as Mai Dada, during a counterattack in the Maru Local Government Area of Zamfara State.

The operation, conducted between June 25 and 26, 2025, was part of a series of coordinated military offensives across the country that also saw the recovery of arms and the rescue of kidnap victims in multiple regions.

Announcing the victory in a statement by the Director of Defence Media Operations, Maj Gen Markus Kangye, on Sunday, the Defence Headquarters said troops neutralised several terrorists, including Dada and recovered a large cache of arms and ammunition.

Kangye said in the North West, troops of Operation Fasan Yama, under 1 Brigade, killed Mai Dada, a notorious terror leader, during a counterattack in Maru LG of Zamfara State.

“In a well planned and executed operations across various theatres, the Armed Force of Nigeria, in conjunction with other security agencies, recorded significant successes in the fight against terrorism, banditry, and other forms of criminal activities across the country, with the recovery of arms, ammunition, and arrest of several suspects between 25 and 26 June 2025.

“Troops of 1 Brigade of Operation Fasan Yama in Zamfara State neutralised a terrorist kingpin identified as Mai Dada during a counterattack in Maru LG, while in Edo State, a criminal suspect at Etsako Central LGA was arrested with a pump-action gun and cutlasses,” he said.

He said in Kaduna State, 2 Battalion troops on escort duty in Birnin Gwari recovered an AK-47 rifle loaded with 30 rounds after repelling an ambush by armed men on motorcycles.

In the North East, Kangye said troops of the Land Component of Operation Hadin Kai from the 82 Division Task Force Battalion, supported by the Air Component, conducted a fighting patrol in Ngoshe, Gwoza Local Government Area of Borno State.

He said they recovered 408 rounds of 12.7mm ammunition, 1,200 rounds of 7.62mm, and two 40mm RPG bombs along a known withdrawal route used by insurgents.

Also in Borno, Kangye said troops of the 21 Special Armoured Brigade raided a terrorist hideout in Bama LG, killing three fighters, seizing a Dane gun, and destroying life support structures.

“In a related development, troops of Sector 3 in Monguno, Borno State, intercepted a vehicle conveying supplies suspected to be terrorist logistics supplies.

“One suspect was arrested, while items recovered from him included 65 litres of PMS, four bags of rice, five bags of groundnuts, four bags of NPK fertiliser, some tubers of yam, seven motorcycle headlights, 10 solar lights, 2,000 empty cement bags, four solar panels and one mobile phone,” he added.

In Benue State, he said troops of Operation Whirl Stroke stationed at Jooter/Kyado rescued five kidnap victims during a firefight along the Peykia–Wukari Road in Ukum LG.

“Following a firefight, the kidnappers abandoned the victims and fled into the bush. Troops rescued five passengers and recovered one vehicle,” the statement added.

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In the South-South, he said troops of the 5 Battalion arrested two suspects in Otuoke, Bayelsa State, with locally made pistols and a round of 9mm ammunition.

“Relatedly, troops of JTF Operation Safe Haven conducted offensive operations at Tangur, Kwakas, Horop, Tulus, Jinak, and Hokk village in Bokkos Local Government Area of Plateau State.

“During the operation, troops exploited the mountainous areas in the communities with the aid of UAV/drone and recovered one Dane gun abandoned by the criminals on sighting troops,” he stated.

In a statement on Sunday during the interdenominational church service held in Abuja as part of events marking the Nigerian Army Day Celebration 2025, Oluyede reaffirmed the unwavering commitment of the Nigerian Army to eradicating terrorism and securing the country through intensified counter-terrorism strategies and sustained collaboration with other security agencies.

“To all those who seek to disrupt the sanctity of our freedom, our heritage of liberty, and our enduring democracy, be assured that your failure is certain and your boast lacks value,” he declared.

Reiterating the Army’s resolve, Oluyede said the force would never relent in safeguarding Nigeria’s sovereignty, defending its territorial integrity, and upholding the rights of all citizens.

“We shall never depart from our honour which is tied to our faith and we will continue to live true to the Nigerian Army motto, Victory is from God Alone,” he said.

According to the COAS, NADCEL is a time to reflect on the Army’s 162 years of service, celebrate its resilience and sacrifices, and honour fallen heroes as well as families who bear the burden of their absence.

He said the interdenominational service, alongside Jumat prayers, reflected the Army’s spiritual foundation and acknowledgement of divine guidance.

“This stems from the prevalence of faith and hope being the tenets of moral guidance and emotional stability that reinforce ethical behaviour and motivate us all to act honourably during operations,” he added.

Oluyede called on Nigerians to continue supporting the military in its mission to ensure national security and peace.

“The Nigerian Army belongs to all Nigerians, and security is for all. We expect them to give us their maximum support so that we can do our jobs better,” he said.

In his sermon, the Acting Director, Chaplain Services (Protestant), Lt Col Martins Amuluche, stressed the importance of loyalty and integrity, urging soldiers to remain committed to their faith and duties.