

Troops kill Boko Haram commander, 200 bandits in Borno, Niger

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A file photo of the Nigerian military troops.

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Troops of Operation Hadin Kai have neutralised a top Boko Haram commander, Ibn Khalid, alongside scores of insurgents, including the group's cameraman, in Borno State.

The Nigerian Army also confirmed the killing of over 200 bandits during a fierce gun battle in Niger State, while a joint Nigerian-Nigerian military offensive crushed an Islamic State West Africa Province stronghold near Damasak, in Borno State.

In a statement on Wednesday, the Acting Deputy Director, Army Public Relations, Headquarters Theatre Command, Capt Reuben Kovangiya, said troops repelled an infiltration attempt in Monguno, Borno State, and recovered a cache of arms and military gear.

"Items recovered included a large quantity of 7.62mm special ammunition, one PKT belt, an AK-47 rifle magazine, a Rocket Propelled Grenade bomb, and other military gear," he said.

On the encounter in Bitta, Gwoza Local Government Area, Kovangiya added: "In a separate encounter at Bitta, troops again repelled an infiltration attempt. The insurgents were met with superior firepower, leading to the death of several fighters, including Ibn Khalid, a senior Quiad commander, and the group's cameraman.

Troops recovered more weapons, AK-47 magazines, and a camcorder from the scene."

The army further disclosed that in subsidiary operations across Sambisa Forest, Madagali, and Kaga LGs of Borno State, 17 additional terrorists were neutralised and several motorcycles and logistics items were seized.

Similarly, in Niger State, troops of the Nigerian Army killed scores of bandits attempting to attack Warari, a community in Rijau Local Government.

Eyewitnesses said the bandits, numbering over 200 and riding on motorcycles, engaged the army in a four-hour gun battle but were overwhelmed.

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A military source, speaking anonymously, confirmed:

“A large number of the insurgents were killed in the gun battle, while others who attempted to flee on their motorcycles were gunned down by the troops. This group had been responsible for recent attacks in the local government area.”

Attempts to reach the state’s Commissioner for Homeland Security, Mohammed Bello, for comments were unsuccessful as he neither answered calls nor replied to messages.

In a video trending online and sighted by The PUNCH, villagers hailed the troops for the successful operation across the areas.

In another major development, Nigerian and Nigerien forces launched a joint offensive on a fortified ISWAP camp between Damasak (Borno) and Diffa (southern Niger Republic).

The operation, led by the Air Component Command of Operation Hadin Kai, began with four precision airstrikes that dismantled anti-aircraft gun emplacements and killed scores of insurgents.

“The coordinated strikes were immediately followed by aerial bombardments from the Nigerien Air Force, which delivered additional blows to the insurgents’ infrastructure and personnel,” a security source said.

The ground troops then executed a dual-flank assault to secure the area.

“This joint operation points to the recent deepening regional cooperation between Nigeria and the Republic in the fight against terrorism and trans-border criminality in the Lake Chad Basin,” the source added.