

Police admit bandits killed 16 officers in Zamfara

5th December 2018

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The police have come to say that 16 of their men have been confirmed dead while some are still missing in the deadly encounter on November 29, with bandits operating in Zamfara State. The statement ends days of controversy and speculation over the death toll.

“Sixteen police personnel were found dead after the rescue operations carried out by the police Joint Intervention Force,” the police said in a statement from their Zamfara State command.

It noted that during the confrontation, the police successfully rescued 20 officers who were apparently held by the hoodlums.

The statement stated that the Inspector-General of Police, Ibrahim Idris, had ordered that the command gave “befitting burials for the gallant officers and prompt processing and payments of the life assurance benefits and other entitlements to their families,” noting that: “The supreme price they paid for the security and safety of the country will not be in vain.”

Before now, the police have been reluctant in coming out with the true picture of the deadly encounter with the gunmen; many lives and property of inestimable value have been lost since the commencement of the criminality in the area.

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Even when the police have said that 16 officers were lost, speculations are still rife that the number could be higher than the figure quoted.

On Nov 29, the policemen confronting rising incidents of banditry and cattle rustling in the state were reported to have had a fierce gun battle with the gunmen operating in Birnin Mogaji in Zurmi Local Government Area. The incident was reported to have happened late in the afternoon.

The earlier police statement issued on November 30, said that 104 bandits lost their lives after they ambushed a police convoy. But their latest statement contradicts the first which put the number officers lost at one.

The latter statement admitted that some 20 officers had been rescued, noting that the police have vowed that they had upped their game in efforts to flush out the bandits and end their lingering reign of terror.

Over the past years, bandits and cattle rustlers have ceased some swath of land in Zamfara and Katsina state by the jugular, killing and maiming innocent residents. The combined efforts of the military and the police have not been successful in bringing the criminality to an end.