

50 killed, thousands displaced in fresh Benue, Taraba attacks

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From **Rose Ejembi**, Makurdi

Gunmen suspected to be herdsmen on Thursday evening again attacked Gwer West and Katsina-Ala Local Government areas of Benue State, killing about 36 people and abducting many others.

This was just as 14 others were also killed in separate killings in Taraba State.

It was gathered that the invaders attacked some villages in Shikaan, Mbagena, Kpav communities all in Shitile area of Katsina-Ala Local Government as well as Tinader village in Gwer West Area of Benue State, killing several people on Thursday night. Although sources from Katsina-Ala claimed

that no fewer than 36 people were killed in the attack, a military source told our correspondent in confidence that 19 people were killed by the attackers suspected to be loyalists of the slain Benue Militia warlord, Terwase Akwaza alias Gana.

It was gathered that the gunmen invaded Shikaan, Mbagena and Kpav communities of Shitile area in Katsina Ala Local Government area and shot sporadically killing several people and leaving others injured.

Also, it was gathered that gunmen suspected to be herdsmen attacked Tinader village on Makurdi-Naka Road on Thursday afternoon, killing five persons and abducting some others including a woman who was traveling on the road with her son at the time.

Efforts to get the council boss of Katsina-Ala, Alfred Atera to confirm the report of the attack on his council were not successful as he was yet to pick his calls at the time of this report. However, Chairman of Gwer West Local Government, Mrs. Grace Igbabon confirmed the attack on her council saying so far, five corpses had been recovered from the scene of the attack.

Igbabon also confirmed the abduction of some persons by the gunmen whose whereabouts was yet unknown at the time of this report.

"Even this morning, there was an exchange of fire between herdsmen and villagers at Mbakpa village. One corpse has so far been recovered from the area," Igbabon said. Police Public Relations Officer (PPRO), DSP Catherine Anene confirmed the Gwer West attack but said she was yet to be briefed on the latest Katsina-Ala attack. A military source who did not want to be named said the Katsina-Ala killing was carried out by the local bandits. But he dispelled claims that 36 persons were killed, saying the number of those killed was far less than that.

"It is true that some people were killed in some villages in Katsina-Ala Local Government on Thursday, but it was carried out by the local bandits in the area."

Force Commander of Operations Whirl Stroke (OPWS), Brig. Gen. Clement Apere could not be reached on phone at the time of this report.