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Security forces kill 70 bandits in Niger forests, free 500 stolen cattle

FROM **JOHN ADAMS**, MINNA

NIGER

THE total war against gunmen in Niger State declared by the state governor, Alhaji Abubakar Sani Bello two weeks ago has been yielding positive results, as the Joint Security Taskforce has neutralized over 70 armed bandits in the last one week. The Joint Security Task Force, which also comprises special hunters in the state, have equally intercepted over 500 cattle.

The Joint Security Task Force has intensified it operation in the forests at Galadiman- Kogo, Kusasu, Alawa and Erena communities in Shiroro Local Government and Kutchi, Zagzaga, Guni and Katarma in Munya Local Government Area of the state.

The Commissioner of Local Government, Chieftaincy Affairs and Internal Security, Emmanuel Umar confirmed the on-going operation when he spoke with newsmen in Minna, saying that a number of the gunmen have met their waterloo in the hands of the Joint Security Task Force.

He pointed out that the recovery consisted of over 300 cows and over 200 sheep, adding that many more were still being recovered as the gunmen are on the run. All the animals, which were rustled by the gunmen, he said were being kept under the care of the Ministry of Livestock in the state, waiting for the owners to come forward to claim them.

He disclosed that a number of the gunmen were heavily neutralized while some members of the Joint Security Task Force were killed during the encounter with the gunmen.

While appreciating the sacrifice of the security men to the state and the country in general, the commissioner assured that the government would take care of the families of the slain officers. Umar said the onslaught against the gunmen in the state would be a continuous exercise until the state is rid of all rustlers, kidnappers and other criminal elements. A number of the gunmen were arrested during the gun battle; the commissioner however did not disclose the number of arrest made so far.