

NAF bombards terrorists' stronghold in Niger, kills notorious commanders, others

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From **Molly Kilete**, Abuja

The Nigerian Air Force (NAF), said its' Air Component of Operation Whirl Punch, has bombarded a terrorists stronghold in Alawa Forest, Niger State ,killing several terrorists and their commanders including a notorious terrorist kingpin, Mallam Umar.

NAF Director of Public Relations and Information Air Vice Marshal Edward Gabkwet, said Air strikes carried out on Saturday, 27, April, 2024, by the Air Component of Operation Whirl Punch targeted at terrorists' hideouts in Shiroro Local Government Area (LGA) of Niger State and against economic saboteurs in the Niger Delta region have yielded significant results.

Gabkwet, in a statement, said In Shiroro LGA, the strikes were executed at the stronghold of notorious terrorist kingpin, Mallam Umar, and several other commanders located in the Alawa Forest area.

“The strikes conducted were sequel to extensive Intelligence Surveillance and Reconnaissance (ISR) operations in the targeted area, revealing clusters of huts within compounds amidst dense vegetation, with significant presence of armed terrorists loitering around the vicinity. Also, painstaking intelligence earlier gathered had confirmed that these same terrorists were responsible for the recent attacks on ground troops at Bassa Community as well as multiple Improvised Explosive Devices (IEDs) incidences along the Pandogari-Alawa Road within the same LGA.

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Accordingly, the Air Component promptly deployed its air assets to decisively eliminate the terrorists, resulting in effective and maximum damage to the targets. A post-strike Battle Damage Assessment later confirmed the neutralization of several of the terrorists and the destruction of their hideouts, with positive consequences on their ability to attack surface forces as well as innocent civilians within the area.

He said Similar air strikes were also carried out the same day in the Niger Delta region against economic saboteurs and oil thieves bent of illegally siphoning crude oil from mutilated pipelines, while destroying the environment and ecosystems. This time, surveillance over Ke, Egbema, Akaso Krakama, Krikama and Military Council Valley revealed retinue of illegal refining sites which were effectively destroyed by the Air Component of Operation Delta Safe. A Cotonou boat fully loaded with crude oil product was also observed at Akaso Krakama about to depart southwards and was subsequently attacked and destroyed. At Krikama, several cooking sites were observed and destroyed as well. In all 18 illegal refining sites and three cotonou boats were destroyed.

These strikes have substantially weakened the potency of terrorist elements in the Northwest and oil thieves in the Niger Delta region to continually constitute a security threat to the well-being of the

nation and its citizenry. For the NAF, air operations while collaborating with other security agencies will continue across the nation through extensive situational awareness, constant patrols and targeted interdiction of criminals' safe havens .