

Troops kill 21, lose 3 soldiers in shootout with bandits in North-West

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GUSAU, JOS, MAKURDI AND EBONYI

Yesterday was a Black Friday as reports reveal the series of killings recorded across the geo-political zones of the country.

In Katsina State, the Nigerian Troops under Operation Sahel Sanity yesterday said it killed 21 armed bandits as an officer and two other soldiers gallantly lost their lives in a shootout, during the attack on Unguwar Doka under Faskari Local Government Area of the state last Thursday.

In a similar development, suspected gunmen, also on Thursday night, attacked K-Vom (Gwol) Village in another fresh attack and killed five persons in Vwang District of Jos South Local Government Area of Plateau State.

Our correspondent gathered from the villagers in Plateau State that the attackers descended from nearby hills shooting at the close range around 10pm.

Also in Benue State, at least 30 chiefs are said to have been killed in Gwer West Local Government Area by youths in the area using charms and other fetish powers.

The paramount ruler of Tyoshin community, Chief Daniel Abomtse, said this yesterday during the burial ceremony of Governor Samuel Ortom's Special Adviser in the Bureau for Local Government and Chieftaincy Affairs (BLG-CA), Elder Jerome Torshimbe in Naka, headquarters of the local government.

Also, two persons were reportedly killed in a renewed boundary war between the people of Izzi in Ebonyi State, and their neighbouring Obubara in Cross River State.

The two neighbouring communities have been at war for many years with many killed and properties worth millions of naira destroyed.

The age long boundary war restarted on Wednesday this week leaving a nine-year-old boy and another aged

man, whose identities are yet unknown, dead.

Three persons from Obeagu Ibom, Amachi, Izzi communities were also declared missing during the attack.

A statement by the Acting Director, Defence Media Operations, Brigadier-General Benard Onyeuko, which was made available to journalists in Gusau, said the success was recorded following quick response to credible information communicated to the troops on bandits attack on innocent communities.

He said: "In the aftermath of the decisive encounter, the gallant troops successfully rescued three kidnapped victims including an eight-month-old baby, who have been in the custody of the criminals for more than 23 days.

"During the exploitation phase of the operation, the gallant troops recovered one AK 47 rifle, one AK 47 magazine and three Motorcycles from the fleeing bandits.

"Regrettably, resulting from the encounter with the bandits, one gallant officer and two soldiers paid the supreme sacrifice while two other soldiers were wounded in action and are currently receiving medical treatment in a military medical facility and responding positively.

"The fearless troops have continued to pursue the bandits into the forest and dominate the general areas with aggressive fighting patrols to deny them any respite."

Also, the Plateau State Police Commissioner, Edward Egbuka, who visited the scene of the attacks yesterday, while Speaking with Journalists, confirmed that the attack was carried out by yet to be identified gunmen in the K-Vom community and shot five persons.

He said: "The situation is under control now, but this is a setback to the peace we have been trying with all stakeholders and other security agencies to manage in Plateau State."

"The Police have an idea of the cause of the attack; we had a series of meetings in

the community for the past six weeks over isolated incidents of killings."

The Police commissioner however, assures the citizens of Plateau State that they will go after the perpetrators and sponsors of the attack to arrest them.

Commenting, the member, representing Jos South constituency in the Plateau State House of Assembly, Hon. Dalyop Fom, who was on ground to calm the community, condemned the attack and described it as barbaric, urging the security agencies to search for the perpetrators of the evil act.

He said it was a sad time and moment for the constituency because of several attacks and killings of members without perpetrators being arrested.

Speaking, a survivor, Dalyop Gyang, who had several injuries on his head, told journalists that the attackers were two, who came to their area around 10pm and he saw them dressed in green, but could not recognise any of them.

Likewise, the vigilante leader in the community, Alabi Gyang, told our correspondent that a few weeks ago, one of the vigilante members was killed by suspected herdsmen and no arrests have been made.

Abomtse said: "There were isolated murder of elders on account of oracle consultation by youths using fetish powers, which sent over 30 persons to their early graves spanning from 2012 to date.

"My council has done its best to curtail this phenomenon to no avail. We really need a government sledge hammer to descend on perpetrators and those connivers of this dastard acts and appeal to your government to speedily respond to check this ugly trend."

Reacting to the allegations, Governor Samuel Ortom, who personally graced the occasion, warned the youth to desist from the act, adding that perpetrators would be apprehended and summar-

ily dealt with.

He described Torshimbe as a man of character and integrity; one who was committed and dedicated to duty and had a desire for him to succeed.

Meanwhile, it was gathered that the suspected warlords from the three Cross River State communities having boundaries with those of Izzi, Eja, Apiampkum, Ijaga oruonya, all in Obubara Local Government Area, had invaded their neighbours in Ebonyi State and attacked them.

A source said: "The warlords from Cross River took over the Ebonyi community on Wednesday and were shooting sporadically at them.

"The police retreated to avoid return fire because if they didn't retreat, the Cross River people would continue to shoot. Three houses were burnt down.

"They took over the village and the villagers relocated to the neighbouring communities. But yesterday police succeeded in entering the village under attack at Obeagu Ibom Village.

"Many houses were damaged, three persons declared missing and two reportedly killed, their bodies were seen on the road but no one could identify them because the village is deserted.

The Ebonyi State Police Public Relations Officer (PPRO), DSP Loveth Odah, confirmed the attack and said that the Commissioner of Police, Sule Maku, has beefed up security in the community.

She said: "The DPO Izzi Division lead a team to the Obeagu Ibom Village in Amachi community, attacked by Ijega, Apiampkum, and Orinya Village all in Obubara in Cross River State.

"Adequate security has been beefed up in the place and the Commissioner of Police Sule Maku, has called on his Cross River counterpart to do the same in their side so that peace will reign while the national boundary commission has also been contacted for demarcation to avoid further destruction of properties and loss of lives."