

Army kills 5 bandits, injures others during air raid in Benue attack

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Troops of the joint military spike Operation codenamed Operation Whirl Stroke (OPWS) yesterday neutralized five suspected armed herdsmen and injured others during an air raid of their hideouts on the border between Benue and Nasarawa States.

Sunday Telegraph gathered that the bandits armed with sophisticated weapons, had in the wee hours Saturday, launched a fierce attack on residents of Anune community on Naka road in Makurdi Local Government Area of the state, leaving many people dead and injuring others.

The attack came days after the bandits laid siege on three villages including Tse Abe, Tse-Ugbadu and Goh in Gwer West Local Govern-

ment Area, during which at least six people were reportedly killed with several others injured and displaced.

It was learnt that as a result of Saturday's bandits' attack, hordes of residents were displaced, just as the armed herdsmen were said to have retreated towards Nasarawa State following the swift response by the troops.

A witness who spoke said: "We saw a helicopter at about 10am flying over our community as well as some soldiers in trucks moving into the forest where the attackers had earlier retreated through.

"About two hours later, we saw one of the soldiers' trucks conveying five corpses of the armed herdsmen who had earlier attacked our community towards Makurdi direction".

He said the insurgents made incursion into the community in the middle of

the night, stressing however that the community didn't have any issue at all with the armed herdsmen before the unprovoked attack.

"As I speak with you, we are still shocked as to why these people would come to attack us because I cannot recollect anybody in our community having any issue with them. The attack was so sudden and unprovoked.

"We kept hearing sounds of gunshots for several minutes. By the time the dust settled, we saw they had killed some persons and injured others.

"I feel so sad right now that these innocent members of our community were killed by the armed bandits but I'm happy to see that the OPWS was also able to go after them and killed some of them too.

"In fact, one of the soldiers told us that when the firing became intense,

some of the armed bandits ran away with gunshot wounds. He said they were able to successfully repel the armed bandits with the full support of helicopter that was deployed for the operation.

The Police Public Relations Officer (PPRO), DSP Catherine Anene confirmed the attack on the village.

Anene said "today (Saturday, April 17, at about 4.30am information was received that gunmen invaded Anune, Naka road, Makurdi. A team of Police officers have been deployed to the area to forestall further breakdown of law and order. Further information will be communicated to you please," she said.

Efforts to get the reaction of Force Commander of OPWS, Maj. Gen. Adeyemi Yekini, hit the rocks as his phone lines were not going through.