

Wednesday 02 April, 2014 Updated 4:59

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Major Military Offensive Begins in Benue, Nasarawa, Plateau States

01 Apr 2014

Views: 5,777

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Nigerian Army

Over 100 terrorists killed in Sambisa forest Refutes reports of missing soldiers, mutiny
Senator Iroegbu

The Nigerian Army Monday commenced a major operation to put an end to the activities of all armed men and criminal gangs who have been engaging in the wanton killing and destruction of lives and property in the three North-central states.

Also, the security forces engaged in the ongoing assault in Sambisa forests, Borno State have killed more than 100 terrorists over the weekend, which is contrary to the 1,000 reported by some media outfits.

The Director of Defence Information (DDI), Maj-Gen. Chris Olukolade in a statement said troops had already been deployed for a major offensive which is covering Benue, Nassarawa and Plateau States.

According to Olukolade, the internal security operations is meant to capture and neutralise all the enclaves of criminal gangs.

He said the Nigerian Air Force (NAF), police and other security agencies are also participating in the operation designed to restore peace in the affected states.

"Law abiding citizens are enjoined to cooperate by providing timely and useful information to facilitate the operation as it affects their localities," he said.

Concerning the situation in Sambisa forest, Olukolade noted that despite the heavy casualty inflicted on the terrorists, troops of the units involved in the advance, on discovering another set, called for additional fire support to enable them finish the mission in record time.

Responding to THISDAY enquiries, the DDI further clarified that "what was erroneously described in the said report as mutiny was a mere exchange of ideas among troops and their commander which is usual in operations.

"In fact, their conduct is considered to be an acceptable demonstration of enthusiasm, high morale and required fighting spirit."

However, Olukolade added most of those earlier reported missing had actually rejoined the unit and are participating in the resumed advance to their assigned objective in the campaign.

"There is no mutiny in the unit as reported. Indeed, mutiny is a very serious offence that is never condoned under any circumstances in the military.

"Please don't insinuate it here. It will be unfair to the troops and their unit," he urged.

Meanwhile, the Finnish government yesterday promised to offer capacity building, humanitarian intervention, practical equipment and life-saving skills to the Nigeria security operatives in its quest to combat the security challenges facing the country.

Finland Ambassador to Nigeria, Ritta Korpivaara, disclosed this in Abuja when she paid a courtesy visit to the embattled Minister of Interior, Mr. Abba Moro.

Korpivaara on behalf of government of Finland expressed her sadness over the security situation in the North-east and also the recent attacks in Benue and Plateau States which have so far claimed several lives.

She said: "The reason why we came today is to discuss the capacity building, humanitarian intervention and practical equipment life saving skills for the Nigeria security operatives in tackling insurgency."

According to her, these are very important for Nigerian forces, Nigerian Immigration Service (NIS), police officers, civil defence, to feel safe in their quest in protecting the country and the lives of the people. "We have a very good training for the security personnel and our security forces to offer the training and all sort of equipment we have produced in Finland is a world class equipment", she stated.

The Ambassador stressed that the Finnish Embassy organised a seminar last year December, nothing that the NIS, the police, customs, the army and Joint Task Forces (JTFs) were invited to see the presentation of the equipment which formed the training and maintenance of the equipment for the security personnel.

Responding, Moro said the visit of the ambassador which was against the backdrop of the security challenges facing the country was not only auspicious but timely.

The minister stated that he was aware that Nigeria and Finland have a good cordial relationship, adding that Finland was one of the first country to congratulate and recognised Nigeria as a sovereign nation when she gained independence in 1960.

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