

Operation Commander taking apprehending the criminals. Ibetoji Chidimma, said to be The ministers were said to spot, some armed criminals will rescue the victims."

MILITARY HUNTS BOKO HARAM IN SAMBISA FOREST WITH ALPHA JETS

Alafa on the fringes of the Sambisa Forest in Borno State.

The air strike was conducted following intelligence surveillance and reconnaissance (ISR) missions that revealed the presence of the terrorists, along with their logistics supplies and equipment, in a group of structures within the settlement."

The statement further noted that the ATF dispatched two Alpha jets to attack the location, scoring accurate hits in the target area, which led to the destruction of some of the structures and equipment as well as the killing of several terrorists."

We Have Made Tremendous Progress in Tackling Insecurity, Buhari Insists

In a related development, President Buhari yesterday in Abuja claimed that the Nigerian military in collaboration with the armed forces of neighbouring countries had made tremendous progress in the war against insurgency

since the inception of his administration.

The President's position is in contrast with the series of attacks launched by the insurgents in the past two months, which has led to the death of some soldiers including military commanders in the last two months.

Senior Special Assistant to the President on Media and Publicity, Malam Garba Shehu, said in a statement that the President made the remarks while speaking at the graduation ceremony of Course 27 at the National Defence College in Abuja.

He quoted Buhari to have said: "This occasion affords me another opportunity to briefly reflect on the state of the Nigerian nation, particularly regarding national security. At the inception of our first tenure in 2015, Nigeria was at a critical crossroad. The Boko Haram group was at the height of its infamy and virtually held Nigeria hostage. It constituted a clear and present danger to our corporate existence as a nation."

"After four years of

grueling work, I can report the progress that we have made in tackling the security challenges, with the combined efforts of our regional coalition partners, the Armed Forces of Nigeria and other security agencies, diverse government agencies, national and international development partners as well as local traditional leaders.

"We have spared no effort to rid the nation of terrorism and insurgency and associated national security and humanitarian challenges. I particularly thank the Armed Forces and other security agencies for their patriotic efforts. I also thank all our development partners and foreign governments for their invaluable contributions."

Shehu also said that Buhari restated the determination of his administration to deploy every arsenal within its reach to promote national security and development, peace and prosperity.

"We remain committed to promoting a vision of a secure, safe, just, peaceful, prosperous and strong nation. Indeed, we shall be employing all elements of our

national and human resources to ensure security, a just society, peaceful co-existence, national unity, prosperity and sustainable development, while promoting our good standing abroad," the president said.

According to the statement, Buhari acknowledged other prevailing security matters that his administration was battling with, saying whereas Boko Haram had lost its campaign; the terrorist group had been factionalised and constituted a new threat to the country.

He also said other criminal activities such as banditry, vandalism, kidnapping, herdsmen's violence, among others, were also new threats to national security in addition to other threats posed by unemployment, ethno-religious crises and fake news.

"In spite of the commendable progress, the Nigerian state is still beset with some existential and fundamental challenges. The Boko Haram for instance, having lost their insurgency campaign, now factionalised and mutated into a new form of terrorist threat.

"Armed banditry and vandalism, kidnapping, pastoralist/farmers conflicts, cultism and political violence have become the new threats. Other issues such as proliferation of Small Arms and Light Weapons, drug trafficking, drug and substance abuse and communal conflict, all add up to the security mix."

"Furthermore, the state of education, the youth bulge, unemployment, socio-political and ethno-religious divisions, fake news and hate speeches all help to quicken and compound the security challenges," the president was further quoted to have said.

Shehu also said Buhari commended the graduands for the efforts they deployed to become worthy of the certificates they obtained, even as he described the participation of foreign personnel in the course as another attestation to Nigeria's aspiration to foster international peace.

"I congratulate the National Defence College Course 27 graduands and their spouses for your hard work, endurance and

deserved success. You have gone through the crucible, you have endured short nights and long arduous days, you have passed the test of fire, and today is surely your day of glory."

"Let me specially congratulate graduands from friendly nations for consolidating the bilateral relationships between our nations. Your participation in the course is a further testimony of our national security policy aspirations to promote international peace, friendship and cooperation," said the president.

The statement further said the president enjoined the graduands to see their graduation as a call to duty in the service of their countries, observing that their nations required the newly acquired knowledge for developmental plans.

It also praised the leadership of the National Defence College for keeping the flag flying after 27 years, training senior officers of the Armed Forces of Nigeria and strategic ministries, departments and agencies as well as military officers from friendly nations.

ATIKU PLAYING UP NEGATIVE STORIES FOR ULTERIOR MOTIVES, SAYS PRESIDENCY

overall intention to sway the forthcoming judgment of the

chided the court, saying it should have considered

"The military has duly countered the story, educating

rather pre-occupied with ulterior motive to influence

bring down the government and the military in his

that the Nigeria Army runs a secret cemetery in which