

Military Deploys Helicopter Gunships Against Bandits in Kaduna, Decimates 50

- *El-Rufai to troops: Let's sustain momentum*
- *Says more bandits must be brought to bitter end*

John Shiklam in Kaduna and Kingsley Nwezeh in Abuja

The Nigerian military yesterday pounded bandits in Kaduna forests with helicopter gunships, neutralising 50 and destroying many of their hideouts. The bombing runs were in response to a recent charge by President Muhammadu Buhari to the military to go after bandits and other criminal elements terrorising parts of the country.

Kaduna State Governor Nasir El-Rufai hailed the renewed onslaught against banditry and kidnapping in the state. El-Rufai appealed to the security forces to sustain the momentum and bring more bandits to their "bitter end".

Commissioner for Internal Security and Home Affairs in Kaduna State, Mr. Samuel Aruwan, who disclosed the airstrikes against bandit posi-



AFENIFERE WELCOMES TINUBU BACK HOME...

L-R: Chief Supo Sonibare; Oba Olaitan Oladipo; Bola Ahmed Tinubu; Afenifere leader, Chief Ayo Adebajo; his daughter, Shade and retired Assistant Inspector General of Police, Tunji Alapini, during their visit to Tinubu in his Bourdillion residence, Ikoyi, Lagos... yesterday

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MILITARY DEPLOYS HELICOPTER GUNSHIPS AGAINST BANDITS IN KADUNA, DECIMATES 50

tions in a statement, said the criminals were neutralised during a combined ground and air assault in the Saulawa-Farin Ruwa axis of Birnin Gwari Local Government Area.

Buhari had on Monday declared total war on bandits wreaking havoc in the country and declared that their days were numbered. The president, who was reacting to the killing, on Sunday, of over 30 people in Goronyo market, Sokoto State, by bandits, sent a tough warning to the criminals, declaring, "The clock of your ultimate destruction is ticking as you will no longer have a place to hide."

Buhari stated, in a release by one of his spokesmen, Garba Shehu, "The days of the bandits are, indeed, numbered, because the military capabilities of our forces are being boosted by the acquisition and deployment of advanced equipment."

"The bandits are living in the fool's paradise of invincibility, but reality will soon dawn on them harder than ever before. The bandits are currently under

desperate pressures, because of the intense and sustained air and ground operations against them in their hideouts by our security forces.

"The cowardly attacks on innocent people by the bandits show a rearguard action of criminals under pressure. But they will have no place to hide and our gallant security forces will not relent in the current offensive to defeat these callous enemies of humanity."

Competent security sources said the air assaults killed scores of bandits in Saukawa-Farin Ruwa Settlement. This was as Nigerian Army Headquarters said troops killed 24 insurgents in two attacks in the North-east and recovered weapons.

The bandits in Kaduna, who rode on motorcycles, planned to ambush ground troops at Dogon Dawa and Damari communities in Birnin Gwari Local Government Area of the state. But were eliminated in the course of their planning, a military statement claimed.

The statement said, "In

continuation of the Kaduna State Multi-Agency Op, the NAF Air Component on 18 Oct 21, provided close air support to ground forces advancing from Dogon Dawa-Damari-Saulawa axis.

"Extensive scan to avert any form of surprise attacks from bandits around the loc led to the interception of armed bandits on 5 x motorcycle 2nm east of Saulawa, staging for a possible ambush on advancing troops. With a good mind of judgment and sincerity of purpose, the helicopter gunship brought the miscreants to their unexpected doom with several precise strikes."

The update affirmed, "After the neutralisation of the bandits' ambush party, armed bandits on about 50 x motorcycles were sighted fleeing towards Farin Ruwa and were struck effectively with weapons on board. Fleeing bandits within the surrounding forests were followed up and engaged by ground forces."

"In maintaining presence for an effective annihilation of the bandits, a second helicopter gunship came overhead the location in dogged support of the ground forces."

"Several armed bandits were seen scampering to safety in disarray under superior fire power from the ground and air forces, and were hit by the air asset overhead. This led to the effective annihilation of large number of armed bandits."

Corroborating the military statement, the Kaduna State Commissioner for Internal Security and Home Affairs said based on operational feedback to the state government by the Joint Operations Command, "Following extensive scans, bandits were spotted on five motorcycles, about 4km east of Saulawa, waiting to ambush the ground forces. They were

engaged vigorously by the helicopter gunship, and were wiped out."

"After this, armed bandits on about 50 motorcycles were sighted fleeing towards Farin Ruwa, and were struck effectively by the gunship. Fleeing remnants were mopped up by ground forces."

"A second helicopter gunship joined the operations, and many more fleeing bandits were neutralised by precise strikes. Assessment revealed that more than 50 bandits were neutralised during the joint operation."

Aruwan said El-Rufai expressed satisfaction with the operational feedback and congratulated the ground troops and gunship crews. The governor "urged them to sustain the momentum and bring even more bandits to their bitter end," the statement said.

In a related development, the Nigerian Army yesterday claimed troops killed 24 insurgents in two attacks in the North-east and recovered weapons. Commander of the anti-insurgency task force, Major General Christopher Musa, told Reuters that soldiers killed 16 Boko Haram insurgents a few kilometres from Maiduguri, the capital of Borno State.

Musa said during the encounter with the insurgents, two gun trucks were seized and one was destroyed.

Army spokesman, Brigadier General Onyema Nwachukwu, confirmed that late on Monday, troops from a joint Nigerian and Cameroonian operation also killed four ISWAP members, who attacked a forward army base in Borno.

Another four suspected insurgents died when their truck mounted with anti-aircraft guns drove over an improvised explosive device, Nwachukwu said.

BUHARI REJOICES WITH GENERAL YAKUBU GOWON AT 87

commendation and gratitude, the statesmanship of the Convener and National Chairman of "Nigeria Prays," saying his vision for a greater country resonates in the programmes he instituted in the 1970s, like the National Youth Service Corps (NYSC), creation of states, and the Reconciliation, Reconstruction and Rehabilitation project, which had become a reference for harmony.

Buhari believed grace and fortune had continued to guide Gowon, as he started out as a career soldier, youngest military Chief of Staff, and youngest Head of State, before turning a Professor of Political Science and founder of the

Yakubu Gowon Centre, an organisation dedicated to good governance, infectious disease control, HIV/AIDS, and malaria.

The president joined family, friends and Nigerians in praying for longer life for the former Head of State.

Gowon is the oldest surviving former Nigerian leader. He rose to power following the July 1966 counter-coup that led to the overthrow and assassination of then the Head of State, General Johnson Aguiyi-Ironsi.

Gowon ruled for almost nine years until his overthrow in the coup d'état of 1975 by Brigadier Murtala Mohammed.