

NEWS

MNJTF Kills Chief Judge of ISWAP, Khalifa Umar, Three Commanders

● *Says gaps closed before Chad's withdrawal of 1,200 soldiers*

Kingsley Nwezeh in Abuja

The Multinational Joint Task Force (MNJTF) weekend said an air strike conducted by its Air Task Force killed a high ranking commander of the Islamic State for West African Province (ISWAP), Khalifa Umar.

MNJTF has also clarified that necessary measures were put in place to close the gap created by the withdrawal of 1,200 Chadian troops from multinational task force.

Umar, a high value target, is believed to be the third in command and chief judge of ISWAP.

An update issued last night by the Spokesman of MNJTF, Col. Timothy Antigha, said Amir Khalid Umar was killed in an air strike conducted in Tumbun Sabo in the Lake Chad Basin.

In continuation of the ongoing offensive operations against the Islamic State West Africa Province (ISWAP) and other purveyors of violence and instability in the Lake Chad Basin, the Air Task Force of the MNJTF neutralised

the third-ranking commander in ISWAP leadership echelon, Amir Khalifa Umar, in an air interdiction conducted yesterday in Tumbun Sabon.

"Khalifa Umar was a high-value target considering that he was also the Chief Judge of ISWAP," the statement said.

Antigha disclosed that in a separate air interdiction conducted in Kwalaram, three other senior commanders of ISWAP were also neutralised.

He said the MNJTF air interdiction of ISWAP training camp and mustering area in Tumbun Madayi also yielded expected result.

"Several terrorists and their commanders who gathered for training or an attack were neutralised or maimed. Battle damage assessment indicates that a sizeable ISWAP terror infrastructure was destroyed," he said.

He affirmed that "the MNJTF is firm in its resolve, in partnership with national forces and operations, to intensify pressure on ISWAP until it capitulates".

Meanwhile, MNJTF has stated that necessary measures were put in place to close the gap created by the withdrawal of 1,200 Chadian troops from multinational task force.

There were concerns that the decision of the Republic of Chad to withdraw 1,200 troops from the North-east and federal government's resolve to embark on a gradual pull out of troops from the region and other volatile areas could ignite increased insurgent attacks in the region.

But MNJTF said the announcement by Nigeria's Chief of Naval Staff, Vice Admiral Ibok-Ete Ekwe Ibas, on plans to

withdraw troops was with regard to internal security operations.

Antigha, told THISDAY that military operations in the North-east are not covered by the Naval chief's assertion.

"What I would say is that the withdrawal of Chadian troops from their previous deployment in Nigeria was not done in confusion.

"It was a deliberate withdrawal and all the relevant control measures were put in place prior to the exercise. Therefore, the apprehension over the withdrawal is unnecessary and uncalled for", he said.

He maintained that "what the CNS said was with regard

to internal security operations.

"The operations in the North-east of Nigeria are not internal security operations and therefore not covered by what the CNS said".

Intelligence sources have criticised the announcement by government to withdraw troops as premature, saying it was the reason for the spike in attacks by insurgents seeking to use the opportunity to reclaim lost ground.

From January 3 to 9, 2020, troops clashed with insurgents in Gwoza, Bama, Mafa and Dikwa in Borno State, Geidam in Yobe State and Michika in Adamawa State with proportionate number

of casualties on both sides.

Insurgents also ambushed the convoy of the Theatre Commander, Operations Lafiya Dole, Major General Olusegun Adeniyi, precipitating a fire-fight that lasted several hours.

There was also a bomb attack at a pedestrian bridge at the market town of Gamboru, near Cameroon while 35 people were injured.

Many people were killed and others rendered homeless during an attack by insurgents in Monguno, Borno State last week.

The insurgents posing as a convoy of soldiers last Tuesday attacked troops inside the town, destroying at least 750 homes in the process.



PDP Holds NEC Meeting Thursday on Edo Congresses