

How we killed 19 in Niger – Kidnap kingpin

By Wole Mosadomi

For over one year, three local government areas in Niger State knew no peace following constant attacks by kidnapers, armed robbers, cattle rustlers and other criminally-minded people.

The embattled local government areas are Shiroro, Munyan and Rafi.

Victims are either killed on the spot, taken alive and whisked away before being killed.

Several of the communities affected who are predominantly farmers have fled the area.

Consequently, the leaders in the council areas sent a Save our Soul message to the Inspector General of Police, Ibrahim Kpotun Idris, and, last week, succour came when a police squad raided a hideout in the area and arrested 13 suspects.

Lawal Maisage Kwale, one of the suspects, is believed to

be the kingpin of the gang terrorising the area.

Sometime last year, Kwale, 35, was said to have led his gang to attack Allawa Police Post, razed it while killing two policemen on duty.

A mosque in the village was also attacked during the early morning prayers allegedly by the gang which kidnapped seven worshipers and 12 others who were whisked away to their hideout where they were slaughtered.

Others arrested are identified as Zakari Mohmoh, Bitrus Yohana, Ibrahim Zakare, Ayuba Waya, Sule Kantoma, Bako Mechanic, Saleh Bala, Abass Masadu, Zebric Usman, Musa Ajawa and Ismail Yusuf.

Arrests

The Public Relations Officer at the Force Headquarters, Jimoh Moshood, who was in Minna, the state capital, to parade the suspects, said the IGP Tactical Squad, led by the



•Heaps of charms recovered from the gang

state Commissioner of Police, Dibal Paul Yakadi, got useful information from members of the public and then raided the suspects' hideout.

The PPRO said items recovered from the suspects include three AK 47 rifles, locally fabricated SMGs, cartridges, dane guns, cutlasses and heaps of harms.

A long knife displayed by the

PPRO, who described it as the "deadly knife", was said to have been used by the gang to slaughter their captives.

Some of the villagers, who also came to watch those who had allegedly terrorised them, could not hold back tears when they beheld the knife which still had blood stains and three of the gangsters who were identified as the executioners

Kwale, the suspected leader of the gang, said he participated in the kidnapping and killings, "but I was led by the devil and I beg for mercy"

residents", he added

Another villager, Aminu Muhammed, sobbed as she claimed that one of the kidnapped residents was her husband, saying he must have been killed.

In a brief interview with our correspondent, Kwale, the suspected leader of the gang, said he participated in the kidnapping and killings, "but I was led by the devil and I beg for mercy".

The alleged chief executioner of the gang, Zakari Madaki, also admitted guilt.

"I take orders from my boss - Lawal Kwale - on where to go and operate and who to slaughter. I slaughtered seven people single-handedly", he said.

All the other suspects confessed to the crime but none of them could categorically state how they were recruited into the gang and why they were so deadly.

In an interview with our correspondent, one of the villagers, Alhaji Abubakar Allawa, described the residents' experiences of the last one year as horrifying.

"These kidnapers and robbers would invade our village when you least expect, shooting and kidnapping