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Soldiers, herdsmen in gun battle in Benue

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By Peter Duru

Makurdi—herdsmen, yesterday, engaged the military personnel of *Operation Whirl Stroke* in a six-hour bloody exchange of gunfire at Tse Chiata in Guma Local Government Area of Benue State.



Soldiers killed in Somali's suicide bombing

Though the causality figure in the battle has not been ascertained, but *Vanguard* gathered that several members of the militant gang were killed in the exchange.

Confirming the development, Chairman of Guma local government area, Mr. Anthony Shawon confirmed that the herdsmen had already taken over and occupied part of Mbagwen community, a border village between Benue and Nasarawa states.

Shawon said: "In fact, there is one 'barrack' they established at Tse Chiata village and immediately they saw the military on patrol in the area they opened fire on them but the military took them on. The battle lasted from morning till about mid day before the military overpowered the armed herdsmen.

“The military also succeeded in burning down the ‘barrack’ which the herdsmen code named ‘72 battalion’ at Tse Chiata. When the military overran them they left but the military discovered that they have a bigger ‘barrack’ in front but they could not reach it.

“The herdsmen have already taken over about seven kilometers of Benue land from the border between Nasarawa and Benue states, where they freely graze after chasing the locals away.

“None of our people who own the communities can access their homes and farmland again.

“Unfortunately, all the bridges in that area have been burnt and destroyed by the militant herdsmen so the military cannot reach those places.

“Our fear is that even our people who are farming now are scared because by November the herdsmen would sack the people from the farms and harvest their crops. That is what they have been doing to us.

“The situation at the moment is that the military are in total control and if not for them none of us would have been able to go back to our homes and farms.”

When contacted, the Commander of the military *Operation Whirl Stroke*, Maj Gen. Adeyemi Yekini, said his personnel on patrol in Guma ran into some of the militant herdsmen who however fled on sighting the team.

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