

Terrorists kill 20 military personnel, 7 mobile policemen, others in Niger

By Wole Mosadomi,
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MINNA—TERRORISTS, yesterday, attacked a mining firm located in Ajata-Aboki in Gurmana Ward of Shiroro Local Government Area of Niger State, killing 20 military personnel, seven mobile policemen and scores of civilians.

Many other security operatives and civilians were also said to have sustained injuries and were rushed to medical centres.

The Niger killings came as two policemen were, yesterday, killed by gunmen at a checkpoint in Enugu.

This is even as the people of Birnin-Gwari in Kaduna State appeared to have heeded the directive of Zamfara State governor, Bello Mattawale, on Nigerians to defend themselves against bandits and terrorists, as they now confront those terrorising their communities.

Among those abducted in the Niger attack are said to be four Chinese nationals working in the mining site.

There are, however, conflicting figure in the number of casualties given by sources in the affected communities.

Vanguard reliably gathered that the terrorists, whose number could not be immediately ascertained, stormed Ajata-Aboki village at about 4pm on Wednesday and made straight to the mining site, shooting sporadically to register their presence and scare the workers.

The terrorists were said to have been armed with sophisticated weapons, including AK-47 assault rifles.

Co-convenor, Concerned Shiroro Youths, Niger State, Sani Abubakar Yusuf Kokki, who confirmed the attack, said seven mobile policemen attached to the firm were gunned down with six other civilians workers in the firm.

Kokki said: "The terrorists gruesomely murdered seven mobile policemen attached to the firm and six other civilians working in the firm. They also succeeded in kidnapping some Chinese nationals and several others who are currently being held hostage."

Kokki stated that the military stationed at Erena town, near the attacked firm, rushed to the scene on a rescue mission during which there was exchange of fire

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between the terrorists and the soldiers.

Several soldiers killed

He said: "On getting wind of the ugly development, the Nigerian Army stationed at a nearby Erena town swung into action by engaging them fire-for-fire during which six officers were gunned down and many others wounded.

"As I am talking to you this morning (yesterday), the death toll has risen astronomically because over 30 soldiers have been discovered in the bush and confirmed dead."

The state Commissioner for Internal Security and Humanitarian Affairs, Emmanuel Umar, who also confirmed the attack, however, said the exact number of casualties from both sides were yet to be ascertained.

He said: "A yet-to-be ascertained number of workers in the mining site, including four Chinese nationals, were reported to have been abducted but I cannot confirm the exact number of casualties and those abducted now.

Gov Bello orders security to rescue victims alive

The state governor, Abubakar Sani Bello, has also directed the security agencies to go all out to ensure the safe return of the kidnapped victims and ensure that none of the terrorists escaped.

When Vanguard visited the IBB Specialist Hospital where the corpses were deposited, it was learnt that over 20 corpses of the casualties had been deposited at the morgue.

One of the doctors who preferred anonymity, confirmed that 20 corpses had been deposited there.

"There can be conflicting figures on the casualties but I can confirm to you that no fewer than 20 corpses of the security personnel have been deposited in the morgue here," the doctor declared.

Some military personnel who sustained injuries, are also said to be on admission at IBB

Specialized Hospital as some wards in the hospital were cordoned off by some security operatives, an indication of their admission.

Gunmen attack police checkpoint in Enugu, kill two officers

In Enugu, gunmen in the early hours of yesterday, attacked a police checkpoint and shot dead two police operatives.

It was gathered that the gunmen overpowered the policemen who mounted a checkpoint at the popular MTD junction at Akwuke, Gamkiana area of the state capital.

Efforts to get police confirmation proved abortive, as the state Police Public Relations Officer, Daniel Ndukwe, did not respond to calls put across by our reporter.

We've started defending ourselves in Birnin-Gwari - Community leader

Meanwhile, disturbed by the activities of bandits in Birnin-Gwari emirate of Kaduna State, a community leader in the emirate and former Managing Director of Kaduna State Media Corporation, Zubairu Abdulra'uf, said yesterday that his people were already responding to the call by Zamfara

State governor, Bello Mattawale, on Nigerians to defend themselves against bandits and terrorists.

It would be recalled that Birnin-Gwari communities have, over time, been taken over by bandits who imposed all sorts of levies on the people.

The bandits also recently banned political activities in the communities, while forcibly recruiting youths in the areas in their fold.

Abdulra'uf said the incessant attacks on his people had completely paralysed economic activities in their rural communities and made travelling in the area difficult or even impossible in some places.

He said: "We have reached the point of no return. People are being pushed to the wall. Just yesterday (Wednesday), the people of Randagi confronted these bandits who tried to overrun their communities. Randagi is one of the areas the bandits have their routes through Zamfara to Niger State.

"The people of Randagi, which is a farming community, succeeded in dislodging the bandits. So, I think our people are now ready, if the government cannot perform its constitutional function."

The former broadcaster with DW Radio, said the bandits had for over two years, imposed tax on the Birnin-Gwari farmers, stressing that N200 million was paid to bandits in Randagi district alone.

Running mate: N/West APC gov other to engage Tinubu

By Omeiza Ajayi

ABUJA—LEADERS of the ruling All Progressives Congress, APC, from the North-West geopolitical zone have resolved to aggregate their interests and engage the presidential candidate of the party, Asiwaju Bola Tinubu.

The decision of the North-West APC leaders comes on the heels of ongoing consultations by Tinubu with critical stakeholders on the choice of his running mate.

Tinubu had earlier submitted the name of Ibrahim Masari

from the Northwestern state of Katsina to the Independent National Electoral Commission, INEC, as his running mate.

Party sources had indicated that Masari is only a "place holder" as his name was submitted to meet the INEC deadline, adding that he would be changed within the window of substitution provided by the electoral umpire.

However, APC governors, gubernatorial candidates and ministers from states of the North-West met yesterday in Kaduna in what they said was the beginning of series of