

Over 70 killed in Nasarawa, Niger airstrikes

By David Odama with agency report

AFIA — A bomb blast suspected to be an airstrike yesterday hits a community in Doma Local Government Area of Nasarawa State, killing no fewer than 40 people.

This came as 30 vigilante personnel in Galadima Kogo, Shiroro Local Government Area of Niger State, have been killed following multiple explosions in the area.

The blast, *Vanguard* gathered was targeted at people suspected to be bandits, who have been terrorizing the residents along the border areas of Nasarawa and Benue states.

It was not clear at press time whether the blast was carried out by the military, but sources said the blast would not be unconnected with the perceived act of terrorism between the Benue and Nasarawa state borders.

Contacted, the state Commissioner for Information, Culture and Tourism, Yakubu Lawal, confirmed the incident.

He said the state government was aware of the blast, disclosing that the Deputy Governor of the state, Dr Emmanuel Akabe, has visited the area to ascertain the incident.

He decided to confirm the number of casualties involved but called on the residents in the state, particularly those in Doma and the adjoining villages to remain calm as the government was doing

everything possible to get to the root of the matter.

He said: "Yes, there's a blast that happened between Nasarawa and Benue states' border, suspected to be air strike. For now, it cannot be ascertained whether it is from military; it is suspicion. May be, it is as a result of surveillance from military operation."

"The deputy governor was deployed to the area. There were casualties but I cannot ascertain the figure because it is still undisclosed for now, the deputy will brief the governor when he comes back."

Also confirming the blast, the state Police Public Relations Officer, Nansel Ramham, said there was an air strike but could not state clearly whether the armed forces were involved in the blast.

Ramham said: "We are aware there was an airstrike around the Nasarawa, Benue border today (yesterday), but what we are not sure whether it was armed forces or from other sources."

"The state government has also confirmed the incident. The number of casualties has not been ascertained."

It will be recalled that, last Monday, no fewer than six school pupils were kidnapped by suspected bandits in Doma, while only two pupils have been rescued.

30 vigilantes killed as explosions rock Niger community

Speaking on the incident on Tuesday, Kabir

Mohammed, a traditional title holder in Erena, said the explosions were caused by airstrikes.

Mohammed said other vigilantes, who were not affected had vacated the area.

"The entire Erena town is in mourning. There was an airstrike today (Tuesday) that killed many. There were about 30 vigilantes that lost their lives today (Tuesday) in Galadima Kogo."

"The vigilante men that were stationed in the area, in fact, as I speak with you, the rest of the vigilantes who survived the airstrike have left the village."

"Currently, virtually all the residents of Galadima Kogo have packed their belongings due to fear. The village is currently deserted."

"The village is very close to Erena town. There is just one road into Erena and Galadima Kogo. After the tragic incident, students from various schools were asked to return home. It was a great tragedy."

Salis Sabo, spokesperson of the Coalition of Shiroro Associations, COSA, said the incident occurred around 12.30 p.m.

He, however, said 12 bodies were recovered at press time, adding that the vigilantes, who were stationed in Galadima Kogo, were at the location to ambush some bandits sighted around the area.

"Yes, the incident took place about 12.30 p.m. As usual, there was a report that bandits were sighted around that region. You know, many residents of Galadima Kogo village that earlier vacated the village had returned

because of the presence of the vigilante men stationed in the village," he told *The Cable*.

"So, when the vigilantes heard bandits were sighted there, they went to the location to ambush the bandits. Unfortunately for them, there was a jet believed to belong to the air force that struck many of them dead."

"So far, 12 bodies of the vigilantes have been recovered."

Contacted, Umar Emmanuel, the state Commissioner for Internal Security and Humanitarian Affairs, said he would revert with more information on the matter.

Wapkerem Maigida, spokesperson of the Nigerian Air Force, NAF, was not available to comment on the incident when contacted.

We lure our victims to construction sites, kill them
—Law graduate

By Gabriel Enoghola

BENIN — A 2007 Law graduate of Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile Ife, Osun State, Williams Abiodun, yesterday, narrated how they dismiss as site