

News

Jihadists from Niger, Mali, Libya taxing Nigerian farmers — REP

● Adds Jihadists work with local bandits to make life unbreable for farmers ● As Reps ask military to deploy more personnel, equipment to comb forests ● Army chief, Lagbaja rules out amnesty for bandits, terrorists ● Troops clear Mangu ambush, neutralize 3 bandits, recover weapons ● It's unacceptable for bandits from outside Nigeria to tax farmers — MBF ● Arrest, repatriate the bandits to their countries — CAN

By Kingsley Omonobi, Peter Duru, Levinus Nwabughioqu & Luminous Jannamike

ABUJA — A member of the House of Representatives representing Tangaza/Gudu Federal Constituency of Sokoto State, Sani Yakubu, has raised alarm, saying jihadists from Niger, Mali and Libya and the local bandits operating in Tangaza Local Government of the state have imposed tax on farmers in the area.

Yakubu, who disclosed this while presenting a motion at plenary yesterday, said Tangaza/Gudu Federal Constituency was surrounded by two forests; Tsauna Forest that stretches over to Gwadabawa, Illela and Niger Republic and Kuyan Bana Forest which also stretches to Gudu and Niger Republic. Revealing that the terrorists within the areas had joined forces, Yakubu said they had apparently vowed to make life difficult for the people who are predominantly farmers.

He said: "The two forests house two terrorist groups, the Lakurawa who claimed to be jihadists from Niger, Mali and Libya and the local bandits terrorising the area.

"The two used to be sworn enemies, but have now joined forces, making it more difficult for the deployed security operatives to address the insecurity in the general area.

"After the deadly act, the

terrorist launched another attack to prevent people from giving their loved ones a befitting burial.

"The people of the area are predominantly farmers and cattle rearers and terrorists have vowed to stop this year's farming activities, if the communities refuse to pay tax.

"If this threat is allowed, it will seriously affect the national food security if adequate measures are not put in place."

Adopting the motion, the House urged the military to deploy more personnel and hardwares to comb the forests to flush out the criminals. It further asked the National Emergency Management Agency, NEMA, to provide relief materials to victims of the unfortunate attack.

Also speaking on the issue yesterday, the member representing Ideato South and North seat federal constituency of Imo State, Ikenga Ikeagwuonu Ugochinyere, said it was worrisome to have terrorists from the neighbouring African countries imposing taxes on Nigerian farmers.

Ugochinyere said the development was tantamount to a threat to the sovereignty of Nigeria.

He, however, expressed optimism that the current administration by President Bola Ahmed Tinubu would

flush the criminals out.

"It's worrisome and it threatens our sovereignty as a nation. Just as the House resolved, it requires urgent attention.

"Our security agencies need to re-strategize to flush out criminals and terrorists. With the resolve and commitment of the present administration, I have no doubt that soon, they will be defeated," he said.

Army chief, Lagbaja rules out amnesty for bandits, terrorists

Also, the Chief of Army Staff, COAS, Maj. Gen. Taoreed Lagbaja, yesterday, described the amnesty programme for bandits and terrorists in Zamfara and other states, as a failed programme.

Lagbaja spoke when he hosted Governor Dauda Lawal of Zamfara State in Abuja. The army chief said the programme failed to achieve its purposes in the past, noting that it only allowed criminals to regroup, reorganise and attack citizens.

His words: "We also have the issue of the amnesty programme that has been instituted, and which has failed not only in Zamfara, but so many other states of the north-west.

"So, I think we need to look at this issue of the amnesty programme because the criminal elements have proven to be incorrigible.

"The issue of amnesty has created an avenue for them to

regroup and reorganise to launch attacks on our defenceless citizens. So I think we need to look at that."

Speaking on the feedback on the activities of troops deployed to restore peace in the state, Lagbaja said he has directed the deployment of more platforms and the release of funds to reactivate unserviceable ones to boost troops' operations in the state.

He said: "We will not have a situation where some people constitute themselves into outlaws and just go into communities and kill children and defenceless women.

"By working on this with the state government and other critical stakeholders, we can eliminate these outlaws and reduce the insecurities by a significant percentage.

"So I want to appeal to you your excellency that as we come up with this strategy to address the issue of the Yan Sakai and other regional groups, the state government should be disposed to the implementation of the measures that we will recommend.

"So that together, we will address the activities of these criminal elements."

Earlier, Governor Lawal said Zamfara has been facing challenging security threats and appealed for the support of the army.

He said: "I will say without mincing words, that Zamfara is the state that is facing the most challenge in the area of insecurity today.

"Therefore, for me, being the number one citizen, part of my responsibility is protecting lives and properties, but I cannot do this



alone.

"I, therefore, need the support of the chief of army staff and his entire team in bringing peace to Zamfara, as well as Nigeria in general."

Troops clear Mangu ambush, neutralize 3 bandits, recover weapons

Apparently responding to the order given by President Bola Tinubu on the killings in Plateau and Benue on Tuesday, troops of 3 Division of the Nigerian Army, deployed to quell the crisis in Mangu Local Government Area of Plateau State, yesterday neutralized three bandits in the area.

A statement from Army headquarters said: "The troops obliterated the criminals when they gallantly fought through an ambush staged by the bandits, while responding to a distress call in Mangu general area.

"After successfully clearing the ambush, the troops recovered three AK 47 rifles, 14 rounds of 7.62 mm special rounds, one motor-cycle and a Constabulary Police Identity card.

Troops are currently on the trail of bandits who escaped with gunshot wounds during the fire fight."

It's unacceptable for foreign bandits to tax farmers — MBF

Reacting to the development yesterday, the Middle Belt Forum, MBF, described it as unacceptable. National President of MBF, Dr. Bitrus Pogu, said: "It is a slap on our country and unacceptable in a nation like Nigeria.

"That cannot be allowed to continue in a Nigerian territory. It is unfortunate that banditry continued unabated in Nigeria during the Muhammadu Buhari regime. Rather than reducing it, the whole thing escalated.

"We have a government that is still trying to get its foot and with all problems hanging, including court cases, it is the responsibility of security forces to wipe this bandits out.

"I have confidence and I'm convinced that our security forces are able to do the job. And I will always say the problem is political will.

"Let the President, whether in this situation or in future situation, give the marching order, show the political will, our military will clear the whole place.

"Let tribalism be taken

Continues on Page 26