

50 bandits, 13 military personnel killed in Niger encounter



By Kingsley Omonobi & Wole Mosadomi, Minna

Bandits have, again, hit the Niger State community during which no fewer than 50 of them (bandits) were gunned down.

Also, 13 military personnel were killed and some local vigilante injured.

The bandits were said to have been terrorising Kundu village near Zungeru in Wushishi Local Government Area of the state in the past few days, leading to troops deploying to chase them out of the council.

The bandits were said to have settled in the area with their cows and other domestic animals rustled from villagers within and outside the communities in the area.

It was gathered that some senior military officers also lost their lives to the bandits.

The killing of the military men, it was gathered, occurred on Sunday.

It was learned that 13 of the casualties were recorded Sunday night while eight others were killed by the bandits, yesterday.

The bandits, it was gathered, had laid ambush for the military men, who were on a rescue mission to the area.

A distress call had gone to the security on the invasion of the bandits in the area in their attempt to escape with their cows to other neighbouring states.

In a swift reaction, the security men blocked the criminals route at Kundu as they were trying to escape but the bandits, who had been informed ahead laid ambush and opened fire on them.

No fewer than five vigilante members from the area also suffered injuries from the firework of the bandits.

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An eye witness from the area, who confirmed the incident to our correspondent said the corpses of the military men had been deposited at the Zungeru Federal Medical Centre.

He said: "The incident is horrible and devastating. We have been able to count at least 21 military personnel corpses deposited at the Zungeru hospital while the injured vigilante members are also receiving treatment temporarily in the same hospital.

"One of the recuperating vigilante, Sani Adamu, told us that they had an exchange of gunshots with the bandits but they overpowered us because of their sophisticated firearms.

"Many of the bandits were also gunned down and their corpses are still littering the area of the battle."

Both the military and Police could not be reached in Minna to comment on the incident.

NAF helicopter crashes

Meanwhile, Nigerian Air Force has said its MI-171 helicopter on a casualty evacuation mission crashed, yesterday, about 1p.m., near Chukuba Village in Niger State.

Director of Public Relations and Information, Air Commodore Edward Gabkwet in a statement said the aircraft had departed Zungeru Primary School enroute Kaduna but was later discovered to have crashed near Chukuba village in Shiroro Local Government Area of Niger State.

He said: "Efforts are currently ongoing to rescue the crew and passengers on board the helicopter."

He said preliminary investigations had commenced to determine the probable cause of the crash.