

Explosion from terrorists' materials killed Sokoto villagers, not airstrikes — DHQ



By Kingsley Omonobi

Following the Christmas day strikes on Lakurawa terrorists dens at Gidan Bisa and Gidan Runtuwa in Silame Local Government Area of Sokoto State, the Defence Headquarters yesterday attributed the death of 10 villagers to the explosion that was triggered by the destruction of Lakurawa terrorists' base and not by direct airstrikes conducted by the Nigerian Air Force.

Director of Defence Media Operations, Maj-Gen. Edward Buba who addressed newsmen yesterday on the unfortunate death of the villagers' death explained that the airstrike was a precision-guided operation targeting the terrorist hideout in the area. He insisted that the fatalities resulted from the secondary explosion that occurred when the terrorists' logistics base housing was hit by airstrikes. He said the terrorists' logistics base housed dangerous materials, including hand cartridges and explosives, which detonated when it was struck by the Air Force's precision munitions.

His words: “The Armed Forces of Nigeria has a duty to defend citizens from terrorists either through peaceful means, or the force of arms. It is in discharge of this responsibility that on 25 Dec 2024, a coordinated joint operation was conducted between the Air Component and the Land Component of Operation Fansan Yamma to destroy Lakurawas Terrorists Group (LTG) hideouts at Gidan Bisa and Gidan Runtuwa in Jirikon Forest in Silame LGA of Sokoto State. Prior to the operation, there was heightened terrorists activities in the area.

“The military conducted sustained Intelligence, Surveillance, and Reconnaissance (ISR) missions for over extended periods to painstakingly confirm that those hibernating in the area were Lakurawa terrorist. Significantly, the operation was rescheduled from an earlier date to 25 Dec 24 in order to allow for further confirmation using Human Intelligence.

“The joint operation was planned such that, the Air Component’s precision strike capability was complimented by the Land Component’s boots on the ground. Pre-operation ISR missions confirmed significant terrorist activity within the general area. HUMINT reports equally corroborated the ISR findings, emphasizing the strategic importance of neutralizing the location.

“Subsequently, aircrafts conducted a precision airstrike on the identified hideouts at about 0600hrs.

“The strike was executed with precision-guided munitions to minimize collateral damage. The Land Component deployed at blocking positions around the target location to prevent the escape of Lakurawas terrorist.

They also provided immediate post-strike assessment and follow-up actions.

“Following the airstrike, ground forces moved into the area to assess the strike’s impact. The ground forces confirmed that the hideout was successfully neutralized, with minimal damage observed in the surrounding village. The ground forces interacted with the locals in area who confirmed presence of the Lakurawas terrorist in the general area. The airstrike achieved its primary objective of neutralizing the Lakurawa terrorist in there concentration area. The destruction of key infrastructure used by the terrorist including arms cache and logistics dumps confirmed strike’s effectiveness.

“ISR and HUMINT reports prior to the operation consistently indicated the hideout was a high-concentration terrorist location. Overall, troops will continue to take painstaking measures to avoid civilian casualties. All civilians casualties are viewed as a needless tragedy. Nevertheless, we will not relent in targeting and dislodging terrorist across our nation.”