

NIGERIA UNDER BANDITS, KIDNAPPERS SIEGE

**IGP vows tougher action*

**No hiding place for them...DHQ*

**Nigerians demand results*

The scourge of abduction, which has strangled social and economic activities in the North-East and the North-West, has spread nationwide as bandits and other criminal elements have moved their operations into major cities across the country. Abduction for ransom has become a major security challenge in Nigeria as kidnapers have moved their activities from the major expressways in the country into

communities in Lagos, Ogun, and Abuja, the Federal Capital Territory in recent times. The hoodlums who are now very daring have stepped up their game and anybody can be a soft target. In Abuja alone over 200 violent attacks have been recorded across all six area councils of the Federal Capital Territory since President Bola Tinubu assumed office on May 29, 2023. These incidents have led to the death of no fewer than 87





residents of the FCT, while 176 were kidnapped within the period. The figures were sourced from Beacon Consulting, a local firm monitoring security issues in the country, and several media reports on violent attacks, including kidnapping and killings in the FCT. Since the assumption of office of the Minister of the FCT, Nyesom Wike, on August 16, 2023, there's been a rise in violent attacks in the nation's capital. The FCT is facing alarming surge in insecurity, prompting concerns among residents and the authorities. The capital city, once considered relatively immune to the prevalent security challenges in other parts of the country, is now grappling with an escalating wave of criminal activities, particularly kidnapping. According to a 2020 report by SB Morgen, Abuja was ranked 11th among locations with frequent abductions, a stark revelation of the evolving security landscape in the region. Over the last three years, close to 50 kidnap cases have been recorded in Abuja, involving over 200 persons. The severity of the issue becomes more apparent when examining the data from January 2021 to June 2023, revealing approximately 40 recorded cases with 236 victims. Between October and December 2023 alone, there were 13 recorded kidnap incidents, impacting 80 victims. These incidents are not isolated to specific areas but have occurred in various locations within Abuja, including Gwagwalada Kuje, Lugbe, Pegi, Abaji, Keti, and Kwali. What is particularly concerning is that these incidents seem to occur unchallenged by security agencies, allowing criminal elements to operate with impunity. The economic toll of the rising insecurity is substantial, with confirmed ransom payments totaling

N653.7m between 2021 and 2022. Residents and businesses in the affected areas are bearing the brunt of the security challenges, and the impact on daily life and economic activities is becoming increasingly pronounced. The most notorious among the incidents over the past seven months includes the abduction of seven persons, including six girls kidnapped on January 5, 2024, in the Bwari Area Council. Latest amongst the incidents was the abduction of the wife and one of the in-laws of a lawyer, Cyril Adikwu, on Thursday, January 18, at the Nigerian Army Post Housing Scheme in the Kurudu area of Abuja. The incident, according to a neighbour of the victims, occurred around 10pm in the Phase 2 area of the estate. Also, on January 7, 2024, armed men abducted 12 from an estate in the Bwari area of Abuja. On December 12, 2023, a total of 23 residents of the Dei-Dei community in the Bwari area of the FCT were also abducted. A nursing mother and three children were kidnapped in Abuja on December 12, 2023. An Abuja-based musician and his band members were kidnapped on December 18, 2023, while two persons were kidnapped in the Mpape area of the FCT on July 16, 2023. Following a rise in the incidents, Nigerians have called on the Federal Government and the security agencies to find a lasting solution to the problem. The Inspector-General of Police, Olukayode Egbetokun, has recently launched the Special Intervention Squad in the FCT to curb the activities of kidnapers and bandits wreaking havoc, especially in border towns within the territory. The squad is charged with patrolling and securing the communities in the border areas of the FCT, and intervening to curb and mitigate violent attacks in the nation's capital. Following

the inauguration of the SIS, its operatives commenced patrol across the FCT and border towns, villages and hamlets.

The Force Public Relations Officer, Olumuyiwa Adejobi, who spoke on the issue in an interview, revealed that the deployment of the officers would be all over the FCT, with more attention to crisis-prone areas and exits out of the city. He added that the creation of the SIS was aimed at addressing the security concerns in the FCT. "The deployment will be all over, with more attention to crisis-affected areas and exits out of the city. It is a general operation aimed at addressing the security concerns in the FCT," Adejobi said.

The Commander of the FCT SIS, Bennett Igwe, who led the operatives in Bwari, Kawu, Kubwa and Gwagwalada, among others, and into Niger, Nasarawa, Kaduna, and Kogi states, told our correspondent that the SIS operatives would be stationed in the borders and would be moving in and out of the FCT to apprehend bandits and other insurgents disturbing the peace of the capital city. He added that the SIS was under the command of the Inspector-General of Police at the Force Headquarters hence its operatives were not limited by borders. Igwe said, "We are here tonight in Kawu, where about 23 persons were kidnapped. As you've seen, we've toured the whole of Bwari, and we have shown the criminals that we are ready and we want our people to be at peace." "As we're stationed here and patrolling Bwari, our other officers are also currently patrolling other border towns in the FCT; our operatives are patrolling Gwagwalada, Kubwa, Maraba, and other border towns, villages and hamlets. And we're moving in and out of the border states of Kaduna, Nasarawa, Niger, and Kogi. We will flush the bandits out and return peace and harmony to the FCT." Unveiling the SIS at the Force Headquarters in Abuja, Egbetokun said the alarming rise in criminal activities without equivocation demanded immediate and resolute action. He noted that the approach of the police was comprehensive, adding that beyond immediate intervention, the SIS would also engage in community-oriented policing. Egbetokun said, "As I stand before you

today, I am imbued with a profound sense of duty as we confront the crisis of kidnapping and violent crimes presently afflicting our esteemed nation, particularly in and around the Federal Capital Territory. "The alarming rise in these criminal activities without equivocation, demands immediate and resolute action from us all. It is thus with a determined spirit that I proudly announce the inauguration of the Special Intervention Squad. "Conceived as an elite unit of the Nigeria Police Force, the SIS composed of specially trained, well equipped and highly mobile police officers, and possesses the capacity for rapid intervention and effective containment of significant security breaches, such as those currently threatening the suburb of the FCT and creating panic generally. "This initiative is not just born out of necessity, but out of foresight, diligent planning and commitment to enhancing the already robust security architecture of our nation's capital." Operatives of the SIS visited several villages and hamlets in the Bwari area of Abuja where there had been several attacks by insurgents over the past weeks. One of our correspondents, who followed the operatives during the show of force, observed that the officers stormed Bwari with several Armoured Personnel Carriers, patrol vehicles and buses, and a helicopter. The NPF had in late 2023 announced that the deployment of 40,000 operatives of the Special Intervention Squad, who were undergoing training, would begin with Katsina and nine other states including the FCT. The Force Headquarters also revealed that the proposed commanders, who would be in charge of the squad, would be trained in Mexico while noting that the deployment to the 10 carefully selected states was to pilot the activities of the SIS. Following his assumption of office in June, Egbetokun announced the establishment of the SIS. He noted that the SIS would be a standby team of specially trained officers to quickly intervene in large insecurity occurrences, adding that it was part of the a priority in his administration's endeavour to combat the threat of violent crime.

During a recent visit to Owerri, the Imo State capital, the IG stated that the other 27 states would immediately follow the 10 pilot states that were selected based on the





recent violent crime assessment conducted in the 36 states and the Federal Capital Territory. Adejobi noted that the SIS would not operate like the defunct Special Anti-Kidnapping Squad which was notorious for human rights abuses. The Force spokesperson also revealed that operatives of the SIS which were drawn from the Police Mobile Force would not be involved in escort duties, while noting that the squad's commanders would operate under the command of commissioners of police in their respective states. In June, Egbetokun announced plans to withdraw PMF personnel from VIP escort/guard duties. The IG, who spoke during a meeting with squadron leaders and tactical commanders at the Force Headquarters, said the development was to allow the force to take back its place in the internal security architecture of the country. Meanwhile, while clarifying the misunderstanding in regards to the IG's directive concerning the proposed withdrawal of the PMF from specialised escort and services for VIPs, Adejobi noted that the NPF did not intend to strip VIPs (who are legally and statutorily entitled to police escorts) of their security details, noting that doing so would be unsafe and counterproductive. He said, "Get the message right: We understand that there has been some misunderstanding regarding the directive of IGP Olukayode Egbetokun about withdrawing members of the Police Mobile Force unit from specialised escort and services for VIPs. It's crucial to provide clarifications to address this. "First and foremost, let us be clear: at no point did the Force intend to strip VIPs (who are legally and statutorily entitled to Police escorts) of their security details. Doing so would be unsafe and counterproductive. Instead, the objective is to reassign the withdrawn PMF personnel to the recently established Special Intervention Squad."

Meanwhile, the Minister of the Federal Capital Territory,

Nyesom Wike, has directed the Commissioner of Police in the FCT to provide two new divisional police stations in the Gwagwalada community. The minister also disclosed that from hence forth, police stations across the six area councils would receive new operational vehicles and communication gadgets to enhance the work of security agencies in the territory. Wike made this known during the second in the series of security town hall meetings at the Gwagwalada Area Council. While disclosing that some informants of kidnapers had been arrested, the minister vowed to chase criminals out of Gwagwalada, stating that their time had come. He said, "Security is one thing the President has said he will give Nigerians, because his job is to make sure that he protects lives and property. If we cannot protect lives and property, then our being in government has no meaning. Criminals should get ready, their time has come. "You all know that if I say something, I will do it. And as I have come here today, if you know you are one of the informants to these criminals, or you are one of the criminals too, your time has come. I and the security agencies will pursue you until you will not come near Gwagwalada again." Speaking earlier, the Chairman, Gwagwalada Area Council, Abubakar Giri, requested the establishment of two police divisions in Dobi and Giri to strengthen the fight against insecurity, while the Agumo of Gwagwalada, Muhammadu Magaji, also requested for the provision of a new patrol van for the police in the area. Meanwhile, human rights activist and convener of Concerned Nigerians, Deji Adeyanju, has blamed the displacement of individuals, including scavengers, and the destruction of shanties where disadvantaged people earned their livelihood for the current state of insecurity in the FCT. He also berated the FCT minister over rising insecurity in Abuja. Adeyanju said the distressing reality of the poor, who had been neglected and marginalised,

had made them to resort to criminal acts such as kidnapping in their pursuit of survival. "Rather than adequately relocating these individuals and providing them with alternative means of sustenance, the minister has callously sent them to the streets, exacerbating the desperation and criminal activities in the city," he stated

Suspected bandits also killed a 53-year-old baker, Mr Tijani Amedu, and abducted his 13 relatives, who are mainly children, travelling alongside him, in the Katari area of Kaduna State. The Edo State-born businessman's brother, Rasaq, said the incident happened on January 6, 2024, while the victims were returning to Kaduna after visiting Warri, Delta State. Rasaq said, "They came to visit for the Christmas and New Year holidays. My siblings and their families came to visit. But they got attacked by bandits when they were going back to Kaduna, using two buses. I was told the bandits started shooting on seeing them. The first bus drove through them but the second bus stopped. My elder brother and 13 kids were on the second bus. The bandits took all of them." He said family members later got to know when the children started communicating from their captivity. He said, according to the children, "My elder brother's head was hit and he fell (leading to his death)," adding, "but the 13 kids are still with them. They started (ransom) negotiation from N200m, but now, we're at N50m." He said the family could not raise the N50m, noting, "That's a lot of money." One of the mothers of the children who did not want to be named refused to make any update noting, "Not for now, what we are after is how our children will be out." But Zinab, the wife of Amedu, who confirmed her husband was killed, said the family was seeking help on the matter. "They killed my husband and they went away with 13 children," Zinab told our correspondent in a telephone interview adding that the family was seeking "prayers and help from anybody who can help. We have 13 of our children with them."

Kidnappings have become a disturbing menace in the North, North-Central and some southern states of Nigeria including Ogun and Lagos. Members of the Middle Belt Youth Forum led by its president, Brent Kane, had threatened to hold a protest in Abuja against the rising cases of kidnapping in the region and other parts of the country. The protest was later suspended and rescheduled. The planned protest followed the trending news of scores of abductees who were taken away by bandits from the Sagwari Estate Layout in the Dutsen-Alhaji area in the Bwari Area Council of the Federal Capital Territory, Abuja.

Members of the Middle-Belt Youth Forum staged a protest in Abuja over the rising cases of kidnapping in the region and the insecurity that has ravaged parts of the country. This is coming against the backdrop of the arrest of 10 suspected bandits by the military. The President of the forum, Brent Kane who led the protesters to marched peacefully to the Attorney-General of the Federation's office to demand the declaration of the kidnappers and

bandits as terrorists, and an end to the killings and abductions across the country. This demonstration took place as about 19 abductees were taken away by bandits from the Sagwari Estate Layout in Dutsen-Alhaji area in the Bwari Area Council of the Federal Capital Territory. The kidnappers are demanding N700m ransom for nine of their victims. The kidnappers had killed four of the hostages, including Nabeeha Al-Kadriyar, a 400-level student of Biological Science, Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria, and 13-year-old Folashade Ariyo. Nabeeha was abducted alongside six other siblings and as of Tuesday night, the remaining five sisters, including Najeebah, a 500-level Quantity Surveying student and Nadherah, a 300-level Zoology student, The siblings were kidnapped with their father, Alhaji Mansoor Al-Kadriyar, from their home at Zuma 1, on the outskirts of Bwari town in Abuja on January 11. The captors had released Al-Kadriyar, asking him to pay N60m ransom for the release of his daughters. They later raised the ransom to N100m which they insisted must be paid by Wednesday. The bandits reportedly killed their victims over an alleged delay in providing the ransom. The incident provoked nationwide anger and foreboding over the fate of the remaining captives. Kane said the spate of killings and kidnappings in the North-Central region had left families and individuals in despair. According to him, the kidnappers and bandits operated like terrorists and should therefore be treated as such. He said, "The primary objective of this peace walk, organised by Africa's Morning Centre for Public Policy and Good Governance and the Middle Belt Youth Forum, was to compel the Federal Government through the Attorney-General of the Federation to invoke sections 3, 48, and 49 of Nigeria's Terrorism (Prevention and Prohibition) Act of 2022, to declare these wanton killings and destruction an act of terrorism. "The groups that are kidnapping citizens, wiping out communities, razing down homesteads, farmlands and taking over communities, while indigenous landowners languish in IDPs camps have profited immensely from the subterfuge and presenting themselves as amorphous. 'But a careful study of the manner of their attacks will leave no one in doubt that they operate an effective command and control structure and that their activities are in clear breach of Nigeria's anti-terrorism laws."

Also speaking, the Executive Director of Africa's Morning Centre, Chima Christian, noted that the group



would partner with the youth forum to demand an end to the killings and kidnapping in the middle belt region, stressing that the Federal Government had remained unconcerned about the plight of the masses. "The killings are unnecessary and they show that the government has been recalcitrant to the plight of the people. It is high time these kidnappers were addressed by their name which is terrorists. The constitution is clear about it that anybody involved in the act of kidnapping is a terrorist. "We will be taking the protest to the Attorney-General of the Federation's office to make our position known and we will not relent in demanding an end to this menace," Christian said.

According to a recent report by an Abuja based security firm Beacon Consulting a total of 4,067 persons were abducted and 9,734 were killed by gun men in 2023. A total of 519 persons were abducted in December 2023 alone, the firm said. The report recorded 649 security incidents in December, representing a 10.36 percent decrease compared to November 2023. Also, 882 fatalities were in December, representing 32.98 percent decrease compared to November 2023. The report also revealed an 11.85 percent increase in abductions compared with the November report. "A total of 519 persons were abducted across 229 local government areas in 36 states and the Federal Capital Territory, Abuja," it said. The report ranks the Federal Capital Territory third among the states with the highest number of kidnap victims, with 67 civilians and one government official abducted in December 2023. Sokoto and Borno states ranked second and first with 75 and 122 abducted persons respectively. "On a general analysis of the security development in 2023 (January 1 – December 31), Nigeria recorded 6,525 security incidents including security operatives' actions, as opposed to 5,375 in 2022, representing a 21.40 percent increase. "On the other metrics, Beacon Consulting recorded 9,734 fatalities in 2023 and 11,714 fatalities in 2022, representing a 16.9 percent decrease. "Abductions in 2023 decreased by 35.51 percent as 4,067 persons were abducted while in 2022, 6,306 persons were abducted. The managing director of Beacon Consulting Limited, Dr. Kabir Adamu, commenting on the report, stressed the need for using data to track security developments as a tool for security management and investing in improving the intelligence system. On the evolving trend of violent criminality, he advocates an improvement in the criminal justice system including a reinvigoration of the traditional justice system and restorative justice in addition to other recommendations. He challenged the security agencies to ensure compliance with the existing national security framework and to enhance cooperation, collaboration and coordination if they are to meet the imperatives of the President Bola Ahmed Tinubu administration as contained in the presidential priorities. Adamu called on the National Assembly to adopt a performance measurement mechanism similar to what the Presidency launched with the cabinet when he signed a performance bond with them and the permanent secretaries in November 2023.

A former army spokesman, Brig-Gen Sani Usman (rtd) said security agencies did fairly well in their efforts to tame insecurity in the country considering certain factors; however, more still needs to be done. "Nonetheless, given the circumstances in which they found themselves and the environment in which they are operating, I must say that they have done fairly well, although there is still room for improvement. I think the issue is for the government to give better and all-encompassing strategic directions by imbibing a whole-society approach to security challenges in the country, by addressing political, social, and economic problems in the country". He said security is a complex and multifaceted issue, and addressing it requires a comprehensive and collaborative approach involving various stakeholders, including the government, law enforcement, communities, and individuals. He also called for more effective collaboration and cooperation through information and intelligence sharing among the agencies. "We should imbibe the use of technological solutions to some of the security challenges to enhance surveillance, intelligence and information gathering," he said.

Residents of Garam, a border community between Niger state and the Federal Capital Territory (FCT), were thrown into panic when bandits invaded the village on motorcycles, seeking direction to Jere, a community in Kaduna State. A witness said the bandits brandishing AK 47, swords and arrows, spotted military camouflage, while some put on combat trousers, spent several minutes in the community. The witness said, the bandits numbering more than 100 came into Garam in broad daylight on bikes. The bikes were more than 40 and three bandits were on each bike. They openly displayed AK 47; they also had arrows and swords. Most people ran for their lives because they are not sure what will happen next." Another witness said she saw people running when the bandits came with their bikes. "I saw people running when the bandits arrived. I also peeped where I was hiding and I saw some of them using scarves to cover their faces, while some used masks. Some of them wore combat trousers." Our correspondent learnt that the following day, the bandits invaded the community and raided houses to kidnap people. A witness said: "The bandits started attacking around 10:30p.m. They started burgling shops, especially the shops where some boys were sleeping. They later entered a house close to ours, forced the gate open, broke the windows and removed the burglary, but none of the occupants slept at home. "Since the last attack on January 2, most people have stopped sleeping at home. They come in the morning, and leave at night. But after two weeks of relative peace, some people decided to return and the same day, the bandits struck."

Another resident whose house was attacked said they were just saved by the grace of God. "They attempted to break into our compound around 12:30 am. We didn't even know what to do. While they continued hitting the padlock we used to lock the gate, we were motionless and okayed dead. We just kept praying silently because

there was no one to help. The soldiers were nowhere to be found when they were most needed. They later left our gate before going to the Hausa settlement where they kidnapped scores of people. "One Nupe woman, whose husband is a driver, was kidnapped alongside her two children. But because the woman has chronic ulcer and she had been sick for some time now, she was later abandoned. They tied the woman and the two children to the tree. It was herders that saw them in the bush that set them free and also alerted the soldiers who brought them back."

Armed bandits have abducted about 50 villagers among them 36 women in Magizawa village of Kaura Namoda Local Government Area of Zamfara State. The bandits who attacked the village on Sunday also killed three persons including a member of a vigilante group and injured five others. A resident of the village, who pleaded for anonymity, said the bandits arrived at the village in the night when many residents had retired to bed. He explained that immediately they entered the village, they began to shoot sporadically into the air, thereby scaring

by the bandits to bargain for ransom. When contacted on phone, the Sole Administrator of Kaura Namoda, Alhaji Kasimu Sani Shantalin Kaura, declined comment, saying "Sincerely speaking, I am busy now and I can't speak with you on this issue". Also, the Police Public Relations Officer, Zamfara State Command, SP Yazid Abubakar referred the reporter to the spokesperson of the Operation Hadarin Daji, saying "The Operation Hadarin Daji is responsible for handling issues of this nature." Also in a related development bandits also invaded an immigration post in Kebbi state gunning down two immigration officers. NIS spokesperson in Kebbi, DSI Abdullahi Isa, disclosed this in a statement in Birnin Kebbi. He said "On a sad note, on Monday, January 15, 2024, a group of suspected bandits launched an attack on immigration officers at Garin Garba entry point, about 12km away from Kangiwa headquarters of Arewa local government area of Kebbi. "As a result, two gallant officers lost their lives. They are Isa Nafi'u (II) NIS No. 34057 and Garba Haruna Fana (II) NIS No. 17796," said the statement. The NIS confirmed that the third officer escaped unharmed.



the residents before they conducted house-to-house search looking for their victims. "Although, we have a vigilante group that is patrolling the village at night, the bandits outnumbered members of the vigilante group. The bandits came in a large number and were armed with guns. Members of the local vigilante have done their best, but in the end the bandits killed their member and two others

Another resident, who also does not want his name in print, said "We are suspecting that the attack was a handiwork of some informants among the residents. Members of our vigilante group are brave and are always on the alert, but this time around they were taken unaware by the bandits. We suspect that informants gave the bandits useful information about the activities of the vigilante on the day they invaded the village and that was why they succeeded." Asked whether the bandits have contacted some of the affected families, the resident confirmed that none of the families was so far contacted

He revealed that the two deceased were buried in Birnin Kebbi according to Islamic injunction. "May the Almighty Allah in His infinite mercy forgive their shortcomings and grant them Jannatil Firdaus and give their immediate families the fortitude to bear the irreplaceable loss," the statement added.

However in a determined and renewed onslaught the Nigerian Police and other security Agencies including the Military has intensified efforts to deal ruthless blows on bandits and kidnappers across the country. The Air Component of Operation Whirl Punch has eliminated no fewer than 30 terrorists and kidnappers in an air strike along Kwiga-Kampanin Doka axis in Birnin Gwari Local Government Area of Kaduna State. This is contained in a statement by the Director, Public Relations and Information of the Nigerian Air Force (NAF), AVM Edward Gabkwet, in Abuja. Gabkwet said that the strike followed intelligence received on the movement of the

criminals along the axis. He added that the intel also revealed that the same syndicate was responsible for the ambush on troops at Kwanan Mutuwa on Jan. 27, as well as several attacks and abductions of innocent civilians in Birnin Gwari. According to him, a deliberate and detailed scan revealed a trail of terrorists moving in a convoy of about 15 motorcycles, each with at least two armed terrorists. "Accordingly, the terrorists were trailed to a location where they converged before they were engaged and neutralized in a precision strike." The aftermath of the air strike revealed that several of the terrorists were eliminated as a result of the strike." Gabkwet said the success of the air strike had drawn the attention of the Chief of Air Staff, Air Marshal Hasan Abubakar, who commended the commander and his troop for their precision.

In a related development The Nigerian Army said its troops rescued 32 kidnap victims during a search-and-rescue operation in Katsina State. The Information Officer of Operation Hadarin Daji, Yahaya Ibrahim, in a statement, disclosed that the troops also killed two suspected terrorists during the operation a day earlier. Ibrahim stated that the troops engaged the terrorists in a gun duel which led to the death of two suspected terrorists while others fled with injuries.

He said, "In continuation with the series of simultaneous well coordinated clearance operations in its areas of operational responsibilities in the North West which has continued to yield tremendous successes, troops of the Joint Task Force North West Operation Hadarin Daji operating in Katsina State have rescued 35 kidnapped victims and neutralized two terrorists in Katsina State in a search and rescue operation. "The feat was achieved on January 27, 2024, during a clearance operation to some identified terrorist camps at Dumburum forest. During the operation, troops had an encounter with the armed terrorists,

neutralizing two of the terrorists while others escaped with severe gunshot wounds." He added that the rescued kidnapped victims including 19 male adults, 12 female adults, and four children were handed over to the Katsina State Government by the Commander, 17 Brigade Nigerian Army/Sector 2 Operation Hadarin Daji, Brigadier General OA Fadairo. Fadairo was said to have pledged to continue the attack on the terrorists' enclaves.

The Nigerian Army said its troops have also neutralized 10 terrorists and arrested a bandit's kingpin in clearance operations in North-West region. The troops also apprehended arms smugglers and recovered ammunitions during the raids in Zamfara, Kebbi, Sokoto and Katsina

States. Capt. Yagata Ibrahim, the Information Officer, Joint Task Force, Operation Hadarin Daji, said this in a statement in Gusau. Ibrahim said the troops recorded tremendous successes in coordinated dry season clearance operations in the affected states. "In a recent clearance operation conducted on Jan. 26, the troops cleared and destroyed terrorists' enclaves at Pada, Matso-Matso and Yurlumu villages in Batsari Local Government Area of Katsina State. "During the operation, seven terrorists were neutralized while others escaped with severe gunshot wounds. "In the same day, OPHD troops in Zamfara on fighting patrol neutralized two terrorists at Getso and Ubaka villages under Maru LGA. "The troops recovered one AK47 Rifle, one magazine and 7.62mm special ammunition and two motorcycles," he said. The spokesman said the troops also responded to intelligence report on sighting terrorists movement along SHEME – Dandume road in Katsina State. The troops engaged the terrorists, killed one and forced them to flee. Meanwhile, the troops arrested one Usman Abubakar also called (Harinde), a notorious bandits' leader in Zamfara. The army spokesman said the troops arrested the suspect on Jan. 26, following an intelligence report "Abubakar, 35, has been terrorising Shinkafi and Zurmi LGAs, and



other villages in Sokoto state. "The troops also acted on credible intelligence on a group of notorious gunrunners with intentions to smuggle weapons in to the state which led to the arrest of three suspects in Shinkafi. "The sum of N2.5 million, one Volkswagen wagon car, three mobile phones was recovered from the suspects". He said that a combined troops and personnel of Department of State Security Service (DSS), arrested a terrorists' collaborator, one Ibrahim Atiku at Amawara village in Danmusa LGA of Katsina state. According to him, all suspects are undergoing preliminary investigation before handing over to the appropriate security agencies for further actions.