Bandits in North recruited from Mali, Sudan says Gov. Abubakar Sani-Bello

Bandits from Mali and Sudan are operating in some parts of the North, Niger State governor have said. According to him, the bandits came into the country on motorcycles and are recruited through the social media – especially Facebook. Niger State Governor Abubakar Sani-Bello, who spoke in a statement at the Presidential villa, said he had tabled the matter and other security challenges facing his state before President Muhammadu Buhari. He spoke to reporters at the State House after meeting with the President. Niger is one of the states in the North where banditry and kidnapping are rampant. Sani-Bello added that the other bandits attacking his people are from neighboring Zamfara and Kaduna states. The governor added that besides kidnapping and other forms of crimes, which the bandits commit, they are also threatening the nation's food security by attacking farming, burning farms and killing animals and livestock.

The governor explained that he visited President Buhari to seek federal help against banditry and the repair of deplorable roads in the state. He said: “The situation is very bad. Niger is 73,000 square kilometers. It's the size of the entire South-South and South-East (put together). So, first of all, we have limited number of security personnel and I think we have to start thinking of increasing the number so that we are able to cover most of the local government within the state. Some of our local governments are up to 6,000 to 7,000 square kilometers. For example, the Bobi Grazing Reserve, established by the state government, the CBN and the Federal Government to stop the movement of cattle and avoid herders/farmers conflict, has become a target. “That is the only location where you can find in one constituency 5,000 to 6,000 herds of cows. So, most of the bandits have started focusing their attention on the Bobi Grazing Reserve. Because we have investors that have started investing in capital, equipment and processing facilities. We do not want to discourage them. So, we applied most of our resources and efforts towards protecting the grazing reserve. “But we are having influx of bandits from neighboring states, especially Zamfara and Kaduna states. It is difficult to patrol those areas because vehicles do not go there and it is a forest, which means we will need the federal might, especially the Air Force. By the way, the Air Force has been doing a extremely well in recent times to support our ground operations. “In one particular case, we arrested bandits that are foreigners from as far as Sudan and Mali and they came on motorcycles. They are being recruited through social media, through Facebook in some cases. They confessed to this. They governor said the activities of bandits differ from place to place. Some are cattle rustlers. Some believe they are fighting some kind of jihadist activity. Some believe they are fighting corruption. They see any uniformed person, political office holders as corrupt. “We have a major problem and it must stop.” He said: “The dynamics of the criminal activities have changed. They started with armed robbery. Then, they moved to cattle rustling and then, to kidnapping as a means of getting money. “But recently, the trend has changed. They started burning farms and animals. So, this has given me some concerns and at the same time, it has kept me thinking. What is the motive? “I can understand if you kidnap, you are looking for money. But, when you burn farms, then, there is something else happening. Or when you kill animals. They go to villages and kill animals. They don't steal. “So, if you stop people from going to farms, it means you are trying to deprive that nation of food security. Why will someone want to deprive people of food security? Niger State has the capacity of feeding the entire country. We have the water bodies for dry season farming; we produce a lot of rice, maize.” He said although he had attended a meeting with bandits, “I cannot imagine myself as a state governor and chief security officer of a state, sitting down and negotiating with bandits.”

He said bandits “are never honest in their talks. Even when they were given the opportunity they failed to keep the agreement. And whenever they surrender their arms and they don't ask for anything in return, then, you can tell it is not an honest negotiation.”

On the efforts being made by the state to contain banditry, he said: “Let me tell you what has worked so far and we have made a lot of progress. I moved the responsibility of security to the committee level. And at the committee level, they know themselves. “Vigilantes are controlled by the local government, they are defending their farmlands. They are defending their families. The bandits are being invited by some locals. In fact, we have arrested some village heads. Now, if a whole village head invites or harbors' bandits, then, where are we headed to? The village head is supposed to secure the village. Urging the Federal Government to construct a highway in his state, the governor said traffic is always high on the Minna/North/South road, leading to wear and tear. We also discussed the issue of infrastructure in Niger State. At the moment, 80 per cent more of traffic from the South passes through Niger State, especially through Minna, the state capital.”

BUHARI IS SACRIFICING NIGERIANS INTEREST FOR THAT OF THE NORTH.... FATHER KUKAH

Bishop, Catholic Diocese of Sokoto, Rev. Matthew Kukah,
says the President, Major General Muhammadu Buhari (rtd.), has sacrificed the dreams of Nigerians on the altar of nepotism by allegedly pursuing Northern hegemony. The bishop also said Nigeria appeared to be heading for darkness under Buhari’s regime, noting that the government must explain the mystery behind the endless bloodletting in the country occasioned by insecurity.

He described Nigeria as a rudderless country where the citizens travelled in a boat devoid of captain or crew and without any maps and destination in sight. Kukah said these in his Christmas message titled, 'A Nation in Search of Vindication.'

The bishop said, “This government owes the nation an explanation as to where it is headed as we seem to journey into darkness. The spilling of blood must be related to a more sinister plot that is beyond our comprehension. Are we going to remain hobbled by these evil men or are they gradually becoming part of a larger plot to seal the fate of our country? “President Buhari deliberately sacrificed the dreams of those who voted for him for what seemed like a programme to straitify and institutionalise northern hegemony by reducing others in public life to second-class status. He has pursued this self-defeating and alienating policy at the expense of greater national cohesion.

“Every honest Nigerian knows that there is no way any non-northern Muslim President could have done a fraction of what President Buhari has done by his nepotism and got away with it. There would have been a military coup a long time ago or we would have been at war. The President may have concluded that Christians will do nothing and will live with these actions.”

Kukah maintained that Buhari’s alleged nepotism and commitment to reinforcing the foundations of northern hegemony had dire implications as prominent northerners with a conscience had raised the red flag, pointing out the consequences of his nepotism on national cohesion and trust. He said against the backdrop of Nigeria’s endless woes, the country had become a nation embroiled in desolation with the prospects of a failed state staring the citizens in the face.

He, however, urged Nigerians not to give up despite the pain, sorrow and uncertainty in the land, enjoining them to pray to God to save the nation.

He added, “Yes, our dreams have been aborted. Yes, our commonwealth has been stolen. Yes, our cancer of corruption has metastasized. Yes, we have been guilty of patricide, fratricide and attempted even suicide. Yes, we are hungry, angry, thirsty and starving.

“Yet, we stand firmly with the unshaken belief that no matter the temptations, the world has known worst times. These may be the worst of times, but for men and women of faith, they could be the best of times. We must stand firm and resolute because, our redeemer liveth (Job 19:25).”

The bishop pointed out that the recent abduction of Kankara schoolboys in Katsina coupled with the kidnapping of schoolgirls in Chibok, Borno State and Dapchi, in Yobe State, had further revealed the dangers children are exposed to in the northern part of the country.

He added, “The Almajiri is the poster child of the horrible and inhuman conditions of the northern child. It is a best-kept secret that the region refuses to confront but it has now exposed its underbelly. Now, what (is the) next for the children of the North?

“We thank God that the children (Kankara schoolboys) have been returned safely. This is the easy part. The challenge now is how to deal with the scars inflicted by a derelict nation which is still unable or unwilling to protect its citizens. Yes, we commend the federal and state governments for the rescue operation.

“The larger issues now are whether the federal government understands the evil web of intrigues into which Boko Haram has tied it. Will the Federal Government continue to reward and fund Boko Haram by playing its game? How long can this circle of deceit last for, given that every kidnap merely strengthens their arsenal?”

PDP Condemns Beheading of Farmers By Insurgents...Tasks Buhari to Sit Up on Security

The Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) condemns in the strongest terms, the gruesome beheading of 43 innocent farmers by insurgents in Zabarmari, Borno state. The party describes the act as extremely wicked, devilish and must not be left unaddressed. The PDP notes with pain that this horrific killing of compatriots comes as yet another of the recurring horrid testament and badge of failure of the President Muhammadu Buhari-led APC administration to secure our nation and guarantee the safety of lives and property in our country.

'Indeed, our party is distressed by the escalated killing and maiming of innocent Nigerians by insurgents, bandits and marauders, who have continued to ravage and pillage our communities, while the lazy and lethargic Buhari administration continues with its lip service, rhetoric and false performance claims'.

The PDP is particularly disturbed because of the failure of the Buhari Presidency to take decisive action despite series of concerns raised by Borno state governor, Baba Gana Zulum, of security compromises in the state. The Buhari administration appears helpless while our national security structure under President Buhari seems to have collapsed. Our nation appears to be on auto pilot with no one in charge while the ship of state continues to drift.

All our nation gets from the Buhari Presidency is that 'Mr. President is
shocked', 'Mr. President is saddened', 'Mr. President regrets' and such lame responses without any decisive policy direction or directive to definitively tackle the situation at hand, leading to escalation of killings in our country.

Such attitude by the Buhari administration has continued to embolden insurgents to the extent that they now attack military formations, convey of state governors and engage in wanton beheading of our compatriots.

It is distressing that despite this sorry situation, Mr. President, who promised to lead from the front, has receded into the safety of Aso Presidential villa and refused to act on the consistent demands of Nigerians to rejig the national security architecture and replace the service chiefs with more capable hands to affectively tackle our security challenges.

The PDP charges President Buhari to stop his unhelpful rhetoric. He should sit up and take actions that will safeguard the lives of Nigerians who have been subjected to all manners of mental and physical torture under this incompetent administration.

According to the press statement signed by the National Publicity Secretary of the party, Kola Ologbondiyan, Mr. President should immediately move to Zabarmari in Borno state, empathize with the families of the victims and lead from the front in restoring security in the area. Our party commiserates with the government and people of Borno state and urges Nigerians to remain at alert particularly in providing useful information for our security agencies in this fight against insurgency in our country.

**1,163 IDP-children enrolled in school on Zulum’s 3rd day in Damasak**

**By Inusa Ndahi, Maiduguri**

In the third and final day of Governor Babagana Umara Zulum's humanitarian trip to Damasak, in the shores of Lake Chad, a total of 1,163 children of Internally Displaced Persons were enrolled into primary school after the governor supervised the enrollment campaign. The pupils, who hailed from Guzamala and Abadam local government areas in northern Borno, had been out of school since the displacement of their parents and guardians, by Boko Haram, following attacks on communities they lived. Zulum appealed to parents to allow their children enroll in schools. He noted that where functional schools are provided by government, social welfare assistance from government will eventually be restricted to parents who allow their children and wards to attend schools whether western or combined curriculum of Islamic and western education. The governor also addressed secondary school students in Damasak and those who have written their senior schools certificate exams, in preparation for higher institution. He promised all of them government support to help them actualize their dreams in live. Zulum had traveled to Damasak on a Saturday morning, the day he launched the distribution of water pumps, fertilizer, seeds, chemicals and five thousand naira cash to each of 1,200 irrigation farmers embarking on food cultivation this dry season.

The following day, Sunday, the governor supervised the distribution of food combination to 10,000 internally displaced families in need of support. Each of the 10,000 families received 25kg of rice 25kg of beans, 25kg of maize and 5 litres of cooking oil as part of interventions before they can generate livelihoods for themselves in Damasak.

Damasak, headquarters of Mobbar local government area in northern Borno, is a former stronghold of Boko Haram insurgents before it was liberated with citizens now resettled by Zulum. The governor traveled with Senator Abubakar Kyari, the senator representing northern Borno, who is also an indigene of Damasak. Also in the trip is state caretaker chairman of the APC, Ali Bukar Dalori, commissioner for agric, Engr Bukar Talba and some stakeholders with affiliation to Mobbar LGA.

**ARMY REDEPLEYS 210 GENERALS, 1,336 OTHERS**

The Nigerian Army has redeployed senior military officers in a move to re-jig the various security operations being carried out by the armed forces. A total of 1,546 officers, including 210 generals, 450 Colonels, 309 Majors, 251 Captains and 322 Lieutenants were affected by the exercise. A statement on Saturday by the Director, Army Public Relations, Brig. Gen. Sagir Musa, said the posting which takes effect from January 18, was approved by the Chief of Army Staff, Lt. Gen. Tukur Buratai, and was intended to “reinvigorate the system for greater performance and effectiveness.” The posting saw the redeployment of Maj. Gen. F. Agugo.
from Headquarters Nigerian Army Signals Corps Apapa, Lagos to the Defence Headquarters Department of Communications as Chief of Defence Communications; Maj. Gen. M Mohammed from the Nigerian Army Resource Centre Abuja to Pronto Tech Nigeria Ltd. and appointed Managing Director, Maj. Gen. A Owolabi from Defence Headquarters Abuja (Department of Communications) to Headquarters Nigerian Army Signals Corps as Commander. Maj. Gen. A. Bande is to remain as General Officer Commanding 8 Division Sokoto while Maj. Gen. E. Akerejola was moved from Army Headquarters Department of Logistics to Nigerian Army School of Supply and Transport, Benin as Commandant. Maj. Gen. U. Mohammed remained in the office of the COAS as the Special Adviser Nigerian Army University Biu and Vice Chairman, Nigerian Army Property Ltd., Abuja, while Maj. Gen. C. Eze was redeployed from the Nigerian Army Special Projects to Army Headquarters, Department of Army Logistics and appointed Director, Engineering Services.

The exercise also affected Maj. Ge. O. Azinta from Defence Space Agency, Abuja, as he was moved to the Defence Headquarters as Director, Psychological Warfare; Maj. Gen. A. Dauda was moved from National Defence College, Abuja, to Army Headquarters Department of Policy and Plans and appointed the Director Policy. Maj. Gen. A. Dusu from Army Headquarters, Department of Policy and Plans was appointed the Commandant, Nigerian Army School of Artillery, Kachia, while Maj. Gen. H Ahmed of the Nigerian Army Corps of Military Police maintained his position as the Provost Marshal.

Others include Maj. Gen. T Gagariga who was redeployed from the Nigerian Army School of Artillery, Kachia to Defence Space Agency, Abuja, and appointed as the Deputy Chief of Defence Space Agency; Maj. Gen. J. Iwarra from Army Headquarters Department of Standard and Evaluation was posted to the Department of Army Logistics and appointed Director of Logistics Planning. The statement read, “Maj. Gen. P. Eze to remain at Headquarters Theatre Command Operation Lafiya Dole, Maiduguri and appointed Theatre Logistics Component Commander; Maj. Gen. O. Oluyede to remain in Sector 2 Operation Lafiya Dole, Damaturu as Commander; Maj. Gen. B. Sinjen to remain in Army Headquarters Department of Training and Operations as Director Operations; Maj. Gen. R Abubakar to remain in Defence Headquarters as Defence Liaison Officer, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Abuja.”

Ecowas Parliament 2nd Ordinary Session begins in Abuja

The statutory Second Ordinary Session of the Parliament of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) started in Abuja via videoconference, from Wednesday, 13 to Tuesday, 19 January, 2021 following the reality of the 2nd wave of the SARS-COV-2 pandemic. The Session runs in line with the ECOWAS calendar, to consider and give Parliamentary Opinion on the Community Budget proposal adopted by the Administration and Finance Commission (AFC) of ECOWAS was initially slated to hold, in person, at Abuja, the seat of Parliament. Hon. Sidic Tunis, Speaker of the ECOWAS Parliament in his opening remark disclosed that this session, otherwise known as the “Budget Session”, provides the opportunity, in accordance with provisions of the Supplementary Act, for Parliament to consider the Community’s Budget which specifically is expected to ensure that the estimates are directed towards programs that addresses the needs of the people.

Speaker Tunis said “I make specific reference to Article 17.2a, which states that “after the consideration of the Budget by the Administration and Finance Committee (AFC), the report of the AFC on the Budget shall be presented to Parliament during the Parliamentary Budget Session; In fulfillment of this statutory responsibility, we are expected to render opinion, including where necessary, proposals for the amendment to the draft Community Budget”.

Continuing, he said, “It is pertinent for me to report that in November 2020, the Bureau of Parliament, acting upon Article 25.B/3f/vii of the Supplementary Act Relating to the Enhancement of the Powers of the ECOWAS Parliament, met in Cotonou, Republic of Benin to consider and adopt the 2021 Budget of the ECOWAS Parliament, which was formulated in accordance with the ECOWAS Financial Regulations and Accounting Guidelines and Procedure. The budget, as adopted by the Bureau, sought to strengthen economic and social development, reinforce security and support democratic values in the ECOWAS sub-region as directed by the Extraordinary Summit of ECOWAS Heads of State and Government held on 23rd April 2020.”

Six new Parliamentarians across Liberia and the Republic of Guinea were sworn-in during the Session. The newly sworn-in Members of Parliament are Hon. Jonathan Lambot Kaipay (Liberia), Hon. Souleymane Keita (Guinea), Hon. Ramatoulaye Labbo Diallo (Guinea), Hon. Bandian Neiba Conde (Guinea), Hon. Aboubacar Soumah (Guinea) and Hon Boubacar Diallo (Guinea) respectively.

Welcoming the newly sworn-in MPs into the Parliament, Hon. Sidic Tunis, Speaker of the ECOWAS Parliament, urged the newly sworn in to emulate the track records of the out gone members of whom they are replacing and also challenged them to defend and represent the Community Parliament whom they’ve been called to serve.