

Nigeria's Antikidnap Multi-Agency Fusion Cell: Efforts to End Kidnapping

By Abu, I. Michael

Opinionatedly, it could be argued that Nigeria regressed into reprehensible state of security not for lack of capacity or hegemony but, because of indecisiveness and perhaps ineffective coordination of relevant authorities and resources. Almost getting close to a decade, the country has been battling armed criminals who have been perpetrating various acts of violence in attempt to jeopardize our national security. Kidnapping is one of such acts that has taken the centre stage with various mediums of communication inundated with news of persons both young and old abducted especially in some states of the North West and North Central geopolitical zones.

The situation is seen as a national embarrassment and for the current Federal Government under the leadership of President Bola Ahmed Tinubu an aberration that must be crushed from all edges, and hence the political will to squarely address the entire security challenge is not in question.

The Office of the National Security Adviser (ONSA) under Mallam Nuhu Ribadu is conspicuously working assiduously to address and courageously crush the seeming impasse negating Nigeria's greatness. Through a well-coordinated approaches involving kinetic, non-kinetic, political and others means that are generally acceptable within international context, the Nigerian Government through ONSA is gradually recovering the country not only from abductors but other armed criminals instigating insecurity in the country.

On Monday, April 15, 2024, the National Coordinator of the National Counter Terrorism Centre (NCTC), ONSA, Major General Adamu Garba Laka officially handed over to the NSA the 22 students of the Federal University Gusau, Zamfara State who were abducted along with some other persons by armed bandits on September 22, 2023 at Sabon Gida in Gusau Local Government Area of Zamfara State. The rescued operation was conducted by a combined team of Nigerian Security Forces. The brief but very touching ceremony took place at the auditorium of the NCTC, Abuja in the presence of the Chairman Senate Committee on National Security and Intelligence, Distinguished Senator Shehu Buba Umar; the Vice Chairman Senate Committee on Defence, Distinguished Senator Joel Onowakpo Thomas; and the Zamfara State Government Liaison Officer, Ibrahim Musa Anka who represented Governor Dauda Lawal.

General Laka before handing over the rescued victims to the NSA laid bare the transference schema of the armed bandits and their operational panaches among their other elusive tactics that bowed to the astuteness of the NCTC investigators. It is clear that the clandestine modes of operations have been unraveled.

While receiving the rescued abductees, Mallam Ribadu who emphasized the importance of citizen's cooperation and support. He enjoined Nigerians to keep faith with the Tinubu Administration that has shown genuine commitment in tackling issues of insecurity in the

country, as he acknowledged the president's political will that has invigorated morale of the country's security forces in the war against non-state armed groups for eventual realization of a more available atmosphere for the good people of Nigeria.

Mallam Ribadu is offering a space-age leadership that is evolving a new defence and security architecture that will nuke seeming invisibility of armed criminals in the country. In Mallam Ribadu's leadership pinafore and riding on a multisectoral approach, Major General Laka's passion for excellent performance and flawless success as the NCTC National Coordinator is inspiring successions of collaborative activities, programmes and projects that will end the disturbing security situation.

It is not in doubt that the Tinubu Administration is resolved to fully address our security challenges. This has led to the set-up of a Multi-Agency Anti-kidnap Fusion Cell at the NCTC. This is coming after a meeting of officials of NCTC led by General Laka and the Director General of the National Crime Agency of the United Kingdoms (UK), Mr. Greame Biggar and his team few weeks back. Under this synergy, training of officers drawn from relevant security agencies is ongoing, including a package for further capacity building outside the country. This demonstrates the collective efforts under the current leadership of the Nigerian Government to end kidnapping in the country. The Anti-kidnap Multi-Agency Fusion Cell was first discussed in 2022 during the Security and Defence Partnership Dialogue between Nigeria and the United Kingdom, and this yielded a Multi-Agency Strategic Framework. With this, it is hoped that the activities of bandits/kidnappers in the country will be brought to a minimal.

Abu, I. Michael is Head, STRATCOM, NCTC-ONSA