



MINISTÈRE DE LA COMMUNICATION
MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATION

SECURITY SITUATION IN THE NORTH- WEST REGION

PRESS CONFERENCE

**INTRODUCTORY STATEMENT BY
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MINISTER OF COMMUNICATION**

Yaounde, 28 May 2018

Distinguished Journalists, Ladies and Gentlemen,

I wish you a warm welcome to this meeting to which I have invited you to take stock of the security situation in the North-West and South-West Regions, particularly with regard to the events that took place in the night between May 24 and May 25, 2018 in the territorial jurisdiction of the Santa Subdivision, Mezam Division, in the North-West Region.

Before getting into the crux of the matter, I would like to acknowledge the presence of Colonel Didier BADJECK, Head of the Communication Division of the Ministry of Defence, whom you already know, as a regular guest at our meetings with the press.

Distinguished Journalists, Ladies and Gentlemen,

The investigations carried out by the competent administrative authorities revealed the existence in the localities of PINYIN, BUCHI and MENKA, of armed groups who were planning to wreak havoc among the population to obstruct the celebration of the 46th edition of the National Unity Day, on May 20, 2018.

Actually, these groups of individuals had settled in the said localities about two months ago, devising their various attack plans.

Taking advantage of the suspension of the Gendarmerie Brigade of Ashong near Batibo, the assailants used new corridors to bypass the security devices of our Defence and Security Forces to set up full-fledged cantonments.

Serving as real operating bases, these cantonments enabled them to radiate miles as dynamic networks, thus engaging in their activities of terror, extortion of the populations, drug trafficking, forceful recruitment of young people, and repeated rapes on young girls in various localities.

The terrorists had initially managed to gain the confidence of the people by promising them heaven and earth, should they join their cause.

It should be noted that the particular actions of these hordes of criminals led to the assassination at Bawok, of Senior Warrant Officer ALIME Jean, Commander of the Bali Research Brigade, and one of his elements; the assassination of pupil gendarme DJEMENA Anatole

Fabrice, in the course of the Batibo, Widikum and Amba attacks, to prevent the 20th May celebration in this area.

On May 15, 2018, the Mayor of the Santa Municipality, who doubles as traditional ruler of Balligham village was assaulted by nine armed men who, compelling him to sit on the ground, robbed him of the tidy sum of 300,000 CFA francs.

On that same day, other assailants of the same group inflicted similar abuses on the traditional rulers of Akum and Bamock villages, doing away with hunting weapons and valuable property.

On May 19, 2018, an economic player in the region, named FRU NGU Linus, was kidnapped by the same bands who subsequently claimed the abduction and requested the payment of a ransom of two million CFA Francs to release him. An operation carried out by the Defence and Security Forces led to the release of the victim.

On May 20, 2018, the attackers proceeded with the abduction of Chief FOMINWI Sylvester FONGON of Matazem, a village located two kilometers away from

Santa and his two daughters, who were gruesomely raped. This traditional ruler was accused by his abductors of taking part in the festivities to mark the celebration of National Unity, and also accepting to be decorated with the medal of agricultural merit by the Divisional Officer.

On May 22, 2018, the Fon of Menka village was visited by assailants of the same criminal group who, after molesting him, made away with his hunting weapon.

Within the same period, four young men, including two girls and two boys, were kidnapped and released against the payment of ransoms by their parents.

Two daughters of the President of the PINYIN 5 CPDM Sub-Section, Collins Eric NJIMULUH, were in turn abducted and brutally raped by their abductors.

It was on Wednesday, May 23, 2018 that the terrorists eventually settled in a motel located in the Menka village. This motel belongs to a young native of the village. In her attempt to prevent the assailants from besieging the motel, the mother of the owner, a senior

citizen, was mercilessly beaten by the criminals. To date, she is still in a critical condition.

The assailants took possession of the facility and transformed it into their headquarters in which they held 15 persons hostage.

Informed of the situation, the competent authorities organized a special operation to be implemented on the night between May 24 and 25, under the leadership of the Commander of the No. 5 Combined Military Region, and under the coordination of the Commander of the North-West Gendarmerie Legion.

The operation involved 30 elements of the National Gendarmerie Intervention Group, elements of the 51st Motorized Infantry Brigade and the Special Operations Group of National Security.

The progression was carried out early in the morning of May 25, 2018 and the mounting of the security apparatus around the target occurred around 5:30 a.m. A sentinel from the criminal group, noticing the maneuver, opened fire as a sign of alert.

Faced with the persistent obstinacy of the assailants, our Forces, acting in all professionalism, kept their cool, and started by summoning the terrorists to surrender and release the hostages. This interval lasted for two hours.

Instead of surrendering, the terrorists chose to retaliate by killing 5 hostages. I should indicate here that it was one of the hostages killed by the assailants whose picture was doctored and circulated on social media as being hung by the Defence and Security Forces.

Among the terrorists, only one of them, a woman, accepted to surrender, and got her life saved thanks to that decision.

Well targeted and purposeful shots initiated by our Defence and Security Forces allowed to dismantle the enemy's device and to search the building.

With regard to the toll of this operation, it should be noted that on the friendly side, one person was wounded, namely Second Grade Inspector MODO NAMA Landry, who received a buckshot on his ankle, and on the enemy side, 27 terrorists neutralized, a terrorist captured, another terrorist was injured and is

currently receiving medical care from the military Health Unit.

Five shotguns in service only in special units were seized, including 17 weapons of war and 10 hunting weapons, with more than 2,000 ammunition, thirty military uniforms and five berets belonging to gendarmes and policemen coldly murdered by the same terrorists in Bali, Belo and Batibo.

This operation also allowed the return of dozens of people in the locality who had previously run away from the locality as a result of the terror and atrocities committed by the terrorists.

That was, **Distinguished Journalists, Ladies and Gentlemen**, the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth about these events which unfortunately, sometimes gave room for some regrettable allegations of carnage purportedly perpetrated by the Cameroonian Army on civilians.

As can be seen, our Defense and Security Forces have always acted in strict compliance with their rules of

engagement and the duty to defend the Republican Institutions.

They have once again, in keeping with their vocation, ensured the protection of people and property within our national boundaries.

Therefore, we should once again commend the sense of duty, commitment, courage, self-denial, professionalism and patriotism showcased by our Defense and Security Forces in the fight they are leading, on behalf of the Cameroonian people, against criminal hordes who are taking advantage of secessionist claims to install a climate of terror among the people and pave the way for a lasting destabilization of our Nation.

To the civilian populations held hostage by the murderous madness of these lawless criminals, I hereby extend Government's appreciation for their collaboration with the administrative authorities and with the Defense and Security Forces who are there to secure their protection.

In any case, the **President of the Republic, His Excellency Paul BIYA, Head of State, Commander-in-**

Chief of the Armed Forces, is more than ever committed to restoring peace and security in these two regions of our country, while ensuring these fundamental imperatives throughout the national territory.

I would like to recall in this regard the word of his declaration of November 30, 2017 in Yaoundé, while returning from the Fifth African Union / European Union Summit. I quote: **“I think it is now crystal clear for everyone. Cameroon is the victim of repeated attacks by a band of terrorists claiming to belong to a secessionist movement. In the face of these acts of aggression, I wish to reassure the Cameroonian people that all steps are being taken to put the criminals out of harm's way and to ensure that peace and security are safeguarded throughout the country”**, end of quote.

Thank you for your kind attention.