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PRESS RELEASE

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Cattle rustling in Karamoja: “Cooperate” Museveni tells security agencies

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BARALEGE STATE LODGE, OTUKE DISTRICT: Rampant cattle thefts and the increasing cases of commercialized cattle rustling in the neighbouring districts of Karamoja region have led to an increase in daily cattle markets that security agencies say must be regulated to curb crime.

This was revealed in a briefing by security agencies to President Yoweri Museveni who is on a security assessment tour of the districts bordering Karamoja region. The President was this afternoon meeting senior UPDF officers, Police, Internal Security and RDCs of Lango and East Acholi sub regions at Barlege State Lodge in Otuke County Adwar sub-county in Otuke district to discuss ways of stemming the re-insurgency of cattle rustling that is now becoming commercialized and carried out by karachunas from Karamoja.

While Lango and parts of Acholi have not suffered serious cattle rustling, security agencies reported increasing cases of cattle thefts within the communities neighbouring Karamoja.

The President directed agencies to cooperate and coordinate their operations with their counterparts in the neighboring districts to be more effective.

“Coordinate with each other. In security, you must coordinate horizontally and vertically, that is the only way you can effectively provide a service. Blind deployment is tiring soldiers and costs more for nothing. This is not war, it is an intelligence led operation,” he said.

The President also challenged the police to plan and use government systems including chiefs to fight crime instead of pushing for more manpower.

“Cattle thefts need a law enforcement operation. Manpower must be paid for, must be fed, must be clothed! We must sit as security and see the most effective way the police exploit its force,” he said adding, “I challenge you to check the size of the force at Independence! The size of Uganda has not changed. The Uganda you are looking after is the same one handed over at Independence. They were managing huge areas with small numbers. What you need is to plan and to use government systems like the chiefs”.

During the meeting, the President noted the need for transport from controlled security points, the need to demarcate the border with South Sudan and the issue of Balalo and the habit of sending cows in the bush without herdsmen.

“The issue of Balalo has been dealt with for their indiscipline. If anybody wants to hire balalo, they must have strong fences,” he said. General Museveni and the Security Chiefs later agreed on improving the security roads, have watering points for security personnel, resolve the issue of daily cattle markets which should be monthly and tackle the corruption that is exacerbating cattle theft in the region where trucks are used for ferrying stolen animals.

“If cattle-rustling has been commercialized that is why there is an increase in the daily cattle markets. If the roads are bad, were are the vehicles ferrying the cows passing,” he wondered.

General Museveni reiterated his call to all security agencies in the districts bordering Karamoja sub-region to embrace intelligence led operations as opposed to reactionary ones to end once and for all, the cattle rustling and cases of animal thefts in the region.

“You must have intelligence led operations not reactionary. This is not a war but a law enforcement operation. Discover the person before the raid, not to investigate after the raid. Cattle thieves are not very sophisticated people,” he said.

The Vice President Rt. Maj. Jessica Alupo thanked President Museveni for his efforts to end cattle rustling in the region.

The Commander of the 5th Division Acholi Pii Brig. Gen David Bainomugisha gave a comprehensive report on the security situation in his area of jurisdiction adding that there was now relative calm, save for the isolated cattle thefts by petty thieves and vowed to end the vice.

Those present included the Deputy CDF General Peter Elwelu, Senior Police Officers, Resident District Commissioners and their deputies, Officers from the Internal Security Organisation and other government officials.

The President is due to jointly meet regional leaders from Lango and Acholi and the security agencies to discuss the security situation in the region.

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