Western region grieves as 3 generals die in 2 weeks

The deaths began with that of Maj Gen Francis Takirwa, the deputy commander of the Land Forces.

BY FELIX AINEBYOONA & ROBERT MUHEREZA

Western Uganda is mourning the loss of three senior Uganda People's Defence Forces (UPDF) officers, who died within a span of two weeks.

The deaths, which began with that of Maj Gen Francis Takirwa, the deputy commander of the Land Forces, have cast a sombre mood across Ankole and Kigezi sub-regions.

Maj Gen Takirwa was laid to rest last Thursday at his ancestral home in Sayuni Cell, Rutooma Ward, Bwizibwera-Rutooma Town Council in Mbarara District.

Residents who gathered for the burial described him as a man "larger than life" whose rise through the ranks inspired many young people in the area.

"We grew up together. He was two years older than me. We used to raise animals and hunt together," Mr Nathan Mpirwe, a childhood friend, recalled.

"He had exceptional hunting skills; he never missed a target. We admired him so much. He loved football, and many times we were punished by our parents after sneaking off to play with him on the farms," he added.

Lt Gen Joseph Musanyufu, the Permanent Secretary in the Ministry of Internal Affairs, eulogised Maj Gen Takirwa as a disciplined and impactful officer who dedicated four decades to national service.

"Loss is measured by life's worth and by impact. Maj Gen Takirwa lived positively and left a lasting legacy," Lt Gen Musanyufu said.

"As human beings, we come and must go; what matters most is what one leaves behind," he added.



Army officers lay a wreath on the casket containing the body of Maj Gen Deus Sande at his burial in Kacuro Village, Kyanamira Sub-county in Kabale District on Sunday. PHOTO/ROBERT MUHEREZA

Maj Gen Takirwa served in the army for 40 years, rising from the rank of Private to Major General.

However, even before he was laid to rest, news emerged of another loss. Maj Gen Deus Sande Karachi, the former commander of the Armoured Division in Masaka, who died last Wednesday after reportedly suffering breathing complications, just hours before the burial of Maj Gen Takirwa, who had previously been his superior.

Tribute

Maj Gen Sande was buried at his ancestral home in Kacuro Village, Kigata Parish, Kyanamira Sub-county, Ndorwa East County in Kabale District. He was honoured with a 13-gun salute in a ceremony marked by tributes to his "legacy of sacrifice, professionalism and loyalty."

ABOUT THE DECEASED

Maj Gen Francis Takirwa,
- Deputy Commander of Land Forces.
- Buried in Mbarara District

Maj Gen Deus Sande Karachi
- Former Commander, Armoured Division.
- Buried in Kabale District with a 13-gun salute

Col Moses Amanya
- Attached to Entebbe International Airport
- Burial scheduled in Kiruhura

As the region was still coming to terms with the two deaths, Col Moses Amanya, who had been attached to Entebbe International Airport, also passed on. The cause of his death had not yet been officially communicated by press time.

He is scheduled to be buried tomorrow at his home in Katyaza Village, Kinoni Sub-county in Kiruhura District.

The succession of deaths has unsettled many residents.

Mr Amos Katureebe, a resident of Mbarara City, said the loss of senior officers was frightening but ultimately beyond human control.

"Death is inevitable; everybody has their own calendar," he said. "We get scared because these are people who have done tremendous work and served as good examples in the army. They had a lot of experience, and it is difficult to replace them. Sadly, we are losing important people, but life must continue."

Leaders in the region have since called for what they termed as "matching replacements" to fill the vacuum left by the officers.

Mr Caleb Turyamutunga, the chairperson of the Veterans' Association in Kigezi Sub-region, said the deaths had created a gap that requires immediate attention.

"The passing of the three senior UPDF officers from western Uganda has left a big loophole," he said. "While their command positions may be filled, there is a need to elevate other sons of the soil to similar or higher ranks so that the communities they came from do not feel the pinch."

Mr Turyamutunga also appealed to presidential advisers from the western region to remind President Museveni about broader regional concerns, including unfulfilled pledges on infrastructure and industrial development.

"We appeal to them to raise issues such as the tarmacking of tourism roads, improved air transport, and the establishment of regional industrial parks," he said. "The ranks these officers held meant a lot to the communities and districts they came from."

Appeal

Kabale District chairperson Nelson Nshangabasheija, who also serves as the Patriotic League of Uganda (PLU) coordinator for Kigezi Sub-region, urged the army leadership to consider promoting qualified officers from the region to fill the leadership gap.

"I appeal to the Chief of Defence Forces, Gen Muhoozi Kainerugaba, to look through officers from Kigezi who qualify and elevate them to the rank of General to fill the gap created by the recent deaths," Mr Nshangabasheija said.

He added that having serving generals from a particular region plays a vital role in inspiring patriotism and encouraging the youth to join the armed forces.

"Serving military generals act as role models. Their presence motivates the young generation to join the army and serve their country," he said.

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