

National News

Gen Takirwa: Man who gave it all in civil-military relations

He has been eulogised as an officer who played a crucial role in harmonising relations between soldiers and civilians around the Second Division barracks.

BY RAJAB MUKOMBOZI

A pall of gloom has fallen over the Mbarara community following the death of former Deputy Commander of Land Forces in the Uganda People's Defence Forces (UPDF).

Maj Gen Francis Takirwa was 61. A statement released by the UPDF Acting Director of Public Information, Col Chris Magezi, indicated that Maj Gen Takirwa died on Saturday morning after suffering complications from a stroke.

"The UPDF fraternity, with deep sorrow, announces the death of Maj Gen Francis Takirwa, which occurred this morning at about 0600 hours at the UPDF National Referral Hospital, Mbuya. He died from complications of a stroke," Col Magezi said on Saturday.

Maj Gen Takirwa, a native of Rutooma Village in Kashari, Mbarara District, has been widely eulogised by residents as a disciplined officer who upheld strong civil-military relations throughout his army career.

The Mbarara City Speaker, Mr Bonny Tashobya, said the deceased played a key role in building cooperation between the army and civilians.

"It is through his leadership as the Second Division Commander at Makenke that we realised civilians could access free health services at the barracks. We even started making referrals from Mbarara City Health Centre IV to the barracks," Mr Tashobya said.

He added that Gen Takirwa also helped resolve leadership wrangles within the city administration.

"At one time, the city leadership was embroiled in internal wrangles. He called us for a meeting and told us that if they (the UPDF)

were not united, they would not have succeeded in their missions. He advised each of us, the executive, councillors and members to play our respective roles without interfering with one another. With his strategic guidance, we put aside our differences and became united," he said.

Mr Prosper Tuhaise, the NRM chairperson for Mbarara District, described the deceased as humble, social and approachable despite his senior rank.

"Unlike many senior army officers who are easily identifiable when they visit their villages, it was not the case with Gen Takirwa. Sometimes he would drive himself. He was very social, mingled easily with local people, was disciplined, and often provided guidance on addressing challenges such as poverty. We have lost a great pillar as the people of Mbarara," he said.

Mr Aaron Kanyikirize, the vice chairperson of Mbarara City Taxi Owners and Drivers Cooperative Union, said the late Takirwa played a crucial role in harmonising relations between soldiers and civilians around the Second Division barracks.

"He was the first commander we saw leaving the barracks to engage the community and harmonise relations between soldiers and residents around Makenke. The relationship between the two groups had been strained for a long

WHAT THEY SAID...

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Role model. "He was a very important man, hardworking, committed, reliable, and an exemplary leader in the army. He fought in many wars for the stability of this country and beyond, in other nations. Ugandans will miss his unwavering contribution to the stability of Uganda and Africa at large," Lt Col (rtd) James Mwesigye

time, but through his intervention they are now living in harmony," Mr Kanyikirize said. He added that Maj Gen Takirwa frequently interacted with transport operators, advising them not only on security matters but also on ways to work together to

overcome poverty.

"He would casually come to us without escort vehicles or heavy security. Many times people mistook him for a junior officer or even a civilian," he said.

Lt Col (rtd) James Mwesigye, who worked with the deceased on several security assignments, including during his tenure as Mbarara Resident City Commissioner when Gen Takirwa was the Second Division Commander, described him as hardworking man.

"He was a very important man, hardworking, committed, reliable, and an exemplary leader in the army. He fought in many wars for the stability of this country and beyond, in other African nations. Ugandans will miss his unwavering contribution to the stability of Uganda and Africa at large," Lt Col Mwesigye said.

His predecessor as Second Division Commander, before he was appointed Deputy Commander of Land Forces, Maj Gen Paul Muhanguzi, described the late Takirwa as humble, intelligent, observant and disciplined.

"We are deeply saddened by the passing of our colleague. This is a time when the UPDF needed him most, as the force advances towards greater professionalism. I worked closely with him as a brigade commander under him, and later as his deputy when he was Second Division Commander," Maj Gen Muhanguzi said.

He added: "One of his remarkable qualities was his strict follow-up on assignments and strategic orders from his superiors. He was also deeply concerned about the welfare of the soldiers he led. I recall a time when he contributed his personal money to improve the welfare of soldiers at the Second Division, a very rare practice."

According to Maj Gen Muhanguzi, the late Takirwa served in several positions and units, including the former Presidential Protection Unit (PPU), the Presidential Guard Brigade (PGB), during the fight against the Kony insurgency in northern Uganda, Operation Lightning Thunder in the DR Congo, and as Second Division Commander.

Maj Gen Francis Takirwa was born in 1965 in Rutooma, Kashari, Mbarara District.

