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Kenyan police have launched an operation to capture and punish the gunmen who killed at least 32 police officers over the weekend, according to a department spokesman.

- 5 “We have now laid out another operation plan to ensure that those criminals are apprehended, the livestock they stole is recovered, and the illicit firearms, which they used, are recovered and surrendered to the government,” said police spokesman Eric Kiraithe. “The most important thing is for us to take the kind of action, which would send a very clear message that this one cannot be allowed
10 and it would not be repeated.”

Kiraithe also rejected demands by civil society groups, including the Kenya Human Rights Commission (KHRC), that senior police officers should step aside for an independent investigation into the murder of the officers.

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The groups say Police Commissioner Matthew Iteere, the Provincial Police chief and the commander in Baragoi where the police officers were killed should resign immediately.

- 20 “Our stance is that this was a professional operation, which was properly executed, and you cannot really ask a physician to resign simply because the patient died,” said Kiraithe. “We have an independent police oversight authority, which does not need the permission of anybody, and which does not need the commissioner of police to resign so that they can execute their responsibility.”

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Gunmen in northern Kenya are accused of killing police officers who were hunting for cattle rustlers, one of the worst attacks on police in the country's history.

30 "This was a law enforcement operation and the criminals, who had murdered 12 members of the public, aggravated their offense," Kiraithe said.

Kenyan police say the officers were ambushed Saturday as their truck drove through the remote northern Baragoi district. Officials say nine survivors of the
35 attack have been hospitalized.

Kiraithe says the police have taken corrective measures to prevent any future ambush of police officers.

40 "We have been able to make an analysis of the operation plan, which they used on that day and we have found out that the operation plan was alright," said Kiraithe.

"The intention of the operation," he continued, "was also quite legal,
45 [but] unfortunately, the officers got into an ambush because of a tactical miscalculation, which could not have been avoided."