

37 FEARED KILLED IN FRESH BOKO HARAM ATTACKS IN BORNO

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By Dotun Akano, Lagos (with agency reports)

About 37 persons have been reported killed and several others injured in fresh Boko Haram attacks in Borno State.

Spokesman of the Joint Task Force (JTF), Sagir Musa, a Lt. Col., said on Monday that gunmen suspected to be members of the terrorist Islamic sect who had threatened to launch massive attacks as Ramadan ends lived out their threat by launching coordinated attacks on Sunday.

The gunmen attacked a police base in Bama, a town close to Cameroon border.

Musa said: "Troops have successfully repelled Boko Haram terrorists' attacks on Mobile Police Base and Bama town.

"Terrorists using sophisticated weapons and Improvised Explosive Devices launched attacks at about 6.45 a.m. on August 4, 2013.

"The encounter led to the death of one policeman and 17 Boko Haram terrorists; two soldiers were also wounded," he said.

Musa also said two soldiers were killed when the Boko Haram insurgents staged another attack on the operatives of the Multi-National Joint Task Force (MNJTF).

The soldiers were able to kill 17 Boko Haram terrorists during the attack, he added.

He said the attack took place "about 6:45 a.m. on August 4, 2013 when some Boko Haram terrorists armed with sophisticated weapons attacked MNJTF location at Malum Fatori."

He said normalcy had returned to the two towns.

The recent attacks have heightened the fear of residents in Maiduguri, especially as they prepare for the Eid-el-Fitri which marks the end of the Ramadan fast.

In a related development, the prosecutor of the International Criminal Court (ICC) said on Monday that after a preliminary investigation she believes that acts attributed to the Boko Haram group in Nigeria are likely crimes against humanity.

"Information available provides a reasonable basis to believe that since July 2009 Boko Haram has launched a widespread and systematic attack that has resulted in the killing of more than 1,200 Christian and Muslim civilians in different locations throughout Nigeria," Fatou Bensouda wrote in a report. She said the potential crimes against humanity include murder and persecution.

But she said she will only move to a full-fledged investigation after further study and depending on whether Nigerian authorities themselves are willing and able to prosecute “those who appear to bear the greatest responsibility.”

Her report was based on evidence gathered through December 2012. Bensouda noted that while the Nigerian government forces may also have violated human rights while conducting operations against Boko Haram, as of December 2012 there was no evidence they were targeting civilians. The International Criminal Court is the world’s permanent war crimes court, established in The Hague, Netherlands in 2002.

The prosecutor’s office formally launched its investigation into the situation in Nigeria in November 2010.

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