

Boko Haram snipers kill 3 policemen

**From Hamza Idris (Damaturu) &
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MEMBERS of the outlawed Boko Haram sect appeared to have resorted to guerilla warfare as they waylaid and shot dead three policemen in Damaturu and Maiduguri, centres of the deadly violence sparked by the group in July last year.

In Maiduguri, Borno State, two policemen were shot and their guns taken by four suspected members of the sect, who came riding bikes on Wednesday night, while another cop was killed in Damaturu when other gunmen attacked

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the private residence of Yobe State Governor Ibrahim Gaidam also on Wednesday.

Inspector Shettima Mustapha and newly-decorated Corporal Ahmed Mohammed, both of the Bulunkutu-Gomari Divisional Police Station in Jere Local Government Area in the outskirts of Maiduguri city, were attacked near the Gomari central mosque by four men dressed in black overalls.

The gunmen drove towards the policemen, who were also riding a bike, thereby felling them, before firing at them at close range, according to accounts of security sources. The sources said 16 shells of used ammunition were found at the scene of the killing.

Borno State Police Commissioner Ibrahim Abdu, who confirmed the shootings, told newsmen yesterday the cops were on their way to their beat at the Gomari bus stop for the routine stop-and-search operation and also the enforcement of the ban on the movement of motorcycles, which was recently extended to 10pm.

"They were on a motorcycle. The inspector was riding and the corporal was backed on the motorbike. As they were moving, unknown to them, two motorcyclists were trailing them from behind. They came very close to them, opened fire and killed them. They shot them from behind at the back of their neck," Abdu told newsmen.

He said police investigations are pointing to a particular direction, which he did not mention, following recent series of killings of policemen in similar pattern. "But we do not want to disclose and pre-empt investigations. The SSS and military intelligence are assisting us. The security outfits are all working together to see that the perpetrators are brought to book," he added.

A witness told our reporter that the gunmen might have trailed the policemen "because immediately they swerved across their path with one of their motorcycles, two of them took up positions in separate directions of the fleeing offic-

ers and shot at them until they were sure they had died."

Six policemen have so far been killed in Maiduguri in attacks following similar patterns. One civilian was also killed while another sustained injuries. In all attacks, the gunmen rode on motorcycles.

Residents fear that this could be a comeback or revenge attempt by the Boko Haram sect, which recorded heavy losses in days of fighting with security forces last year.

In Damaturu, the gunmen attacked Gaidam's residence at the Gwange area around 8pm on Wednesday, killing Constable Barde Emos, State Police Commissioner Mamman Sule told journalists. The governor is away in Saudi Arabia for the lesser Hajj.

"The attackers were two in number and they went to the house on a motorcycle," he said. "Immediately they arrived, they used gun and killed the police constable who was guarding the house before they fled away. He died shortly after taking him to hospital. We did not arrest anybody but we have recovered some pellets (used bullets) at the scene of the attack," he added.

Emos said incident was exactly like the one that happened few months ago at the residence of former Governor Bukar Abba Ibrahim, where the attackers killed a policeman and fled away.

"As at now, we are yet to ascertain the actual mission of the attackers even though some people have started giving it political coloration. Personally, I feel it is a reprisal attack by the remnants of the Boko Haram sect," he said.

The commissioner said two members of the Boko Haram sect were arrested at the weekend in Damaturu while downloading some speeches of the late leader of the sect Mohammed Yusuf.

"Some of the sect members are resurfacing in town because they have been discharged and acquitted by courts," the commissioner said.

He said security would be beefed up in Damaturu to forestall further attacks. "We would intensify stop-and-search surveillance from 6pm to 6am everyday," he said.