

One killed as JTF, Boko Haram exchange fire

Written by Hamza Idris, Maiduguri
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A taxi driver was killed yesterday in an exchange of fire between members of the Joint Task Force (JTF) and those of the Boko Haram sect shortly after a bomb explosion at Gomari Junction in Maiduguri yesterday.

The blast came few hours to the inauguration of President Jonathan's committee on the security situation in the North-east.

Spokesman of the JTF, Lieutenant Colonel Hassan Mohammed confirmed that there was an explosion around 7.13am yesterday, but said no one was killed in the incident.

"Yes, there was a blast targeted at our men yesterday. The locally improvised bomb was buried in the pavement that divided a dual carriage way, just by the pole of a solar panel. It went off early this morning (yesterday) but the military did not suffer any casualty. There was no civilian casualty either," he said.

Residents of Gomari said they heard a loud bang followed by sporadic shootings. They also alleged that it was the military that planted the bomb. Fatima Haruna, who lives close to the scene of the incident claimed that she and other members of her family only returned to the state recently from Kano where they took refuge following the security situation in Maiduguri.

"It was a frightening day for us because there were serious gunshots. We hope that peace will be sustained in Maiduguri because the authorities convinced us to come back," she said.

But the JTF spokesman debunked the allegations that soldiers planted the explosive.

"How can we do that? It was the Boko Haram members that started shooting at our men, shortly

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after the blast. The allegations are mere propaganda by enemies of peace. Everyone knows that peace has returned to Maiduguri and people are going about their normal businesses. The allegation that the military shot a taxi driver is also not true. Really, there was a cross fire between the military and Boko Haram members, but the fact is that we don't want to kill anyone.

The spokesman said no arrest was made and urged the public to go about their businesses.

“Some of the blasts are meant to scare people away or to make people living outside Maiduguri to think that all is not well here,” he said.

A source at the University of Maiduguri Teaching Hospital (UMTH) confirmed to our correspondent that the corpse of the driver of a Volkswagen Golf Salon was deposited there.