

100 gunmen raid Azare

● Bomb police bases, banks, kill many

From Ahmed Mohammed, Bauchi

MORE than 100 gunmen suspected to be from the Boko Haram sect raided Azare, Bauchi State, early yesterday morning, bombing two police stations and two banks in an attack that killed many people, residents and police authorities said.

A soldier, a policeman and many other people were killed in the attack in Azare, headquarters of Katagum Local Government Area, about 218 kilometres north of the Bauchi state capital, residents told *Daily Trust*.

The attackers, who launched their

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assault shortly after midnight, bombed the police area command and a nearby police station, reducing them to rubble. They also bombed and robbed local branches for the Guaranty Trust Bank and Intercontinental Bank, residents said.

Bauchi State Police commissioner Ikechukwu Aduba confirmed the incident, saying a police officer, a soldier, a civilian and three gunmen were killed during the attack that lasted for hours.

“Our men did their best; they prevented

the attackers from gaining entrance into the barracks. Every side suffered casualty, we suffered our casualty, our mobile policeman was killed, a soldier was killed, and a civilian, and the hoodlums also suffered many casualties,” he told *Daily Trust*. “It’s a real war because the hoodlums invaded Azare in large numbers. They are over 100. We did our best but because of the power of fire arms both sides suffered casualties.”

The commissioner said over 20 rocket-propelled bombs were launched from outside the area command’s headquarters building, leaving the structure completely

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destroyed. He said about 30 policemen on duty at the area command office responded and repelled the attackers.

“The attack was launched simultaneously at six facilities including the mobile police base, the area commander’s office, the police station, two banks and one Ali Kwara’s residence,” he said. Ali Kwara is a popular local thief catcher, who also served as security adviser to a minister of the FCT in 2007-2008.

The Associated Press news agency quoted Aduba as saying no

arrest was made, but that the Boko Haram sect was suspected of carrying out the attack.

A senior official of Katagum LGA said when they launched their attack, the gunmen blocked all the roads leading to the places they intended to target. “Then we heard sporadic gunshots and huge blasts. The attack lasted for over three hours,” he said.

A Red Cross official, who was at the Federal Medical Centre in Azare where victims of the attacks were taken, said he saw the bodies of a soldier, a policeman and an errand boy for the police, while two police-

men were being treated for gunshot wounds.

Even though the police commissioner confirmed the death of six people including the gunmen, residents told *Daily Trust* that the number of those killed in the attack was much more than the police were admitting.

A resident who does not want to be named said apart from policemen who were killed in the shoot-out with the gunmen, there were also detainees in police cells who were killed as the bombs exploded. He said also that there were newly transferred police personnel stay-

ing in the premises of the area command and some of them might have been killed in the attack.

When asked by *Daily Trust* if the police were understating the deaths, police commissioner Aduba said, “We are not hiding anything. Outside the fence of our office we saw blood, a lot of blood was lost, which clearly shows that they (the gunmen) too have suffered casualties and from the report three of the hoodlums were gunned down.

“Go and ask anybody in Azare, this is the correct number of casualties we recorded. We don’t have anything to hide; we too have relatives

if people are affected they have relatives, the relatives will complain.”

Yesterday, there was heavy presence of riot policemen cordoning the roads leading to the areas attacked as police bomb squad sweep through the rubble of the razed structures. There were unexploded bomb canisters littering the premises of the two banks.

This was one of many similar attacks in Bauchi State in recent months. There had been such gun assaults and bomb raids in Misau, Gamawa, Alkaleri and Toro, some of which were claimed by the Boko Haram sect.