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4 feared dead after JTF clash with gunmen

Written by Hamza Idris, Maiduguri Saturday, 31 December 2011 05:09

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An explosion rocked an area near a mosque in Maiduguri, with witnesses reporting four deaths. A resident said there was a loud sound near the mosque just after the Jumma'a prayers as people were trooping out of the mosque. Other residents of Hausari area of Maiduguri metropolis said they heard a loud blast around 2.30 pm yesterday around the Monday Market, even though the military task force in charge of restoring peace in Borno State said there was none.

Another resident, Mukhtar Surajo said the blast was followed by sporadic gunshots between the security forces and some gunmen. "We heard a deafening sound around 2.30pm, shortly after Juma'a prayers. It was followed by exchange of gunshots close to the Monday Market which is the biggest business district in Maiduguri," Mukhtar said.

But spokesman of the Joint Task Force (JTF) Lieutenant Colonel Mohammed Hassan confirmed that there was exchange of fire between the JTF operatives and suspected gunmen. "Our men foiled an armed robbery attempt at the Monday Market and some nearby shops. When the gunmen laid siege, our men quickly mobilized to the scene," he said.

"Our men overpowered the assailants and they were forced to flee. There was no civilian casualty and nobody was killed or injured from our side," Hassan said. But traders around the market said they saw four corpses and a source at the University of Maiduguri Teaching Hospital said two dead bodies were taken there. Spokesman of Boko Haram, Abul Qaqa said on phone that they were responsible for yesterday's attack. "We targeted soldiers with two explosives," he said.