

Fresh bomb blasts in Kano

Written by Auwalu Umar & Ruqayyah Yusuf Aliyu, Kano
Wednesday, 25 January 2012 05:04



***158 Boko Haram suspects arrested**

***Soldiers kill trader, wife**

Renewed explosions and gunfire were heard last night in two neighbourhoods of Kano, four days after violence blamed on Boko Haram left 185 people dead according to the official tally.

A powerful blast destroyed the Sheka Police Station while sporadic gunfire was heard around the Bompai area, where the state police headquarters is located, residents said.

The fresh bombing and shooting spree started at about 6.30pm at Sheka when gunmen riding motorbikes stormed the neighbourhood and attacked the police station.

Witnesses said the attackers detonated explosives at the police station and fired sporadically for at least 30 minutes.

The BBC Hausa reported a witness saying he saw about seven gunmen riding motorbikes and chanting "God is Great" approaching the police station. Shortly after that, there was gunfire followed by two explosions.

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“The explosives also affected some surrounding buildings. It was a big bang. For now, I cannot say how many of our men are affected or whether the bomber died,” a police officer quoted by Reuters news agency said.

A resident told Daily Trust he heard more than 200 gunshots. He said the gunmen chased fleeing police officers from the station into a nearby primary school in which they wanted to take a cover.

The attack caused pandemonium in the densely populated area, causing injuries to people running to safety. A resident said he saw an elderly woman being taken to a nearby hospital after she was shot in the stomach.

Another witness told Daily Trust that the gunmen were not after civilians but only pursued police personnel in the area. “When one old man ran after the gunmen mistakenly, the attackers told him to leave the scene to avoid being hurt,” he said.

No one could confirm the number casualties in the attacks, but residents said it was very likely that policemen were killed.

Sheka area was among the places where ten vehicles were recovered by security operatives loaded with improvised explosive devices in the past few days.

No security official was available for comment last night. Spokesman for the police Magaji Musa Majiya did not answer telephone calls.

Arrests made; businessman, wife killed

Meanwhile security agencies have arrested 158 suspected members of the Boko Haram organisation in pre-dawn raids on neighbourhoods in Kano city, the BBC reported last night.

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During the raid, soldiers shot dead one Uzairu Abba Abdullahi popularly called Alhaji along with his pregnant wife at their Hotoro Tsamiyar Boka residence in Kano.

Daily Trust gathered that the soldiers stormed the house at about 1am on suspicion that the man was a Boko Haram member. They came in an armour tank and with a helicopter hovering above, residents said, adding they heard gunshots that lasted for a long time.

The corpses of Abba and his wife were taken away by the security operatives as only pool of blood was seen in the sitting room of the house when people trooped in yesterday.

Sources told Daily Trust that neighbours in recent times noticed strange activity around the deceased. They said he was often being seen with strange young people at his home.

But Abba's brother Ali Abdullahi denied that he was a member of Boko Haram follower.

"My brother was innocent and not a member of the Boko Haram as it is believed. I know he is a practicing Muslim and had beard as a Sunnah of the Prophet Muhammad and nothing more. What happened to him is simply indicating that no one is safe because wearing a beard is not enough prove that one is member of the Boko Haram. This is really unfortunate," he said.

The deceased was a businessman at popular Kantin Kwari textile market in the city and has been residing in the Hotoro area for the past seven years.

Relative Musa Ibrahim Fatega told the Associated Press news agency the dead man was also a retired worker from the Federal Ministry of Education. A sedan inside the compound, riddled with bullet holes, bore federal government license plates.

Fatega said the man was not a member of Boko Haram, which claimed responsibility for the

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coordinated attack Friday in Kano that left so many dead.

“He didn’t belong to any religious group. Is it because of his beard?” Fatega asked. “That means you cannot dress the way you are. Is it good? Is this how government is going to treat us?”

Kano state police spokesman Magaji Musa Majiya declined to immediately comment, saying the commissioner of police would brief journalists later yesterday, according to the Associated Press.

AFP news agency quoted a neighbour Mohammed Maikubi Bala saying, “They (soldiers) came in large numbers, some of them stayed on the main road, while others came in through the alley. They began shooting, and he fired back... This was followed by a barrage of gunfire by the security men.”

Cousin of the deceased, Shehu Idris, said, “I was called and told that my brother and his wife had been shot. He was a simple man known to be peaceful and as far as I know he has never been questioned by the security over any links with Boko Haram.”