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Nigeria: Gunmen Kill 7 in Zamfara - Explosives-Laden Vehicle Found in Kano

BY ISMAIL MUDASHIR IN KADUNA & LAWAN DANJUMA ADAMU IN KANO, 6 JANUARY 2013

A group of 30 gunmen attacked two villages in Zamfara State yesterday and killed at least seven people, residents and authorities said. Among those killed was a disabled person.

They attacked Makera and Usu villages in Birnin Magaji Local Government Area of the state early morning yesterday when people were engaged in the subhi (early morning) prayers.

Sunday Trust gathered that the gunmen, riding on motorcycles, assailed Makera village at dawn, shooting indiscriminately at the worshippers inside Juma'at Mosque.

It was gathered that the gunmen killed three persons at the mosque in Makera before leaving for Usu, both in the same Birnin Magaji Local Government Area.

Our correspondent gathered that about 10 persons, including a woman, were also injured by the attackers.

The victims are now receiving treatment at the Federal Medical Centre in Gusau, the state capital.

The state Commissioner of Police Mr Usman Akila Gwary confirmed the number of casualty. He said three of the people were killed in Makera village while four others were killed in Usu.

He said: "Seven persons were killed by the armed bandits who were on a reprisal attack. They killed three in the mosque in Makera and four in Usu village, all in Birnin Magaji. They are Fulani bandits who were on reprisal attack because they were asking for vigilante. They went at the time when villagers were preparing for mosque."

He said the gunmen ran into a thick forest in the area before his men reached the areas. He said they used AK 47 rifles to attack the people, and that his men have recovered 58 shells of the rifles from the scenes of the attacks.

The police commissioner said the attackers did not take any valuables of their victims.

"We could not arrest any of them because they ran into the forest before we arrived there.

"From Birnin Magaji to Makera, it is about 100 kilometres and there is no communication facilities in these villages. These are our challenges. It is becoming something else," he said.

The state Commissioner of Information Alhaji Ibrahim Birnin Magaji described the killings as disturbing.

"We are seriously worried about these killings in the areas. We are talking and working with various security agencies in the state to address the problem," he added.

Zamfara has witnessed many attacks by gunmen in recent months.

Meanwhile, in Kano a vehicle laden with explosives was yesterday found near the building of Triumph newspapers in Fagge area of the city, causing fears among residents.

Security officials said the car, which was parked by roadside in the densely populated area, was carrying Improvised Explosive Devices (IEDs) when it was discovered.



Photo: Vanguard

Militant leaders

Sunday Trust gathered that security agents cordoned off the area and asked nearby residents to evacuate their homes before detonating the devices. Roads leading to the busy street were also closed to traffic as law enforcement agents detonated the devices.

The spokesman of the Joint Task Force (JTF) in Kano, Captain Ikedichi Iweha, said the "explosives-laden vehicle" had been primed for an attack, but was abandoned by its occupants after sighting the JTF checkpoint nearby.

He said the vehicle had now been removed from the scene by a police bomb disposal unit.

Eyewitnesses told our reporter that the vehicle was left in the area close to residential apartment by unknown persons on Thursday.

They said one of the residents alerted security men yesterday morning after discovering that its boot had been locked up, while the doors were left open.

"As the security men came, they asked all of us in the vicinity to leave our homes, while they made attempts to detonate the suspected bomb devices," a resident told Sunday Trust.

"We watched from distance as they attached wires to the boot and (stood) faraway. There was a blast that unbolted the boot," another resident said, adding that it took over an hour before they were allowed to return to their houses.

Kano has been witnessing series of insecurity problems since it suffered one of its worst attacks when Boko Haram militants killed over 185 people on January 20 last year. Although the level of attacks has reduced considerably, low level incidents are still being recorded.

The JTF spokesman said that even last Thursday a suspected attacker was killed by men of the task force along Zungeru Road. He said the man was shot dead after troops came under fire from occupants of a Volkswagen Golf car when the task force members were conveying food to other soldiers on JTF duties.

"The occupants shot at our soldiers, who repelled the attack immediately and killed one of the attackers. Other occupants of the vehicle fled, but an operation is presently going on to track them down," he said.

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