

Boko Haram: 8 killed, 17 injured in Abuja

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PHOTO: Abbas Jimoh & Ronald Mutum

EIGHT people were killed and about 17 others suffered severe gunshot wounds yesterday when a combined team of soldiers and State Security Service (SSS) operatives sacked a purported Boko Haram enclave in an uncompleted building around Zone E, Apo Legislative Quarters, Abuja.

Eye witnesses and some residents in the area told *Weekly Trust* that the incident occurred between 11 pm and 1 am on Thursday night.

Apo is a large, high-brow settlement originally designed for legislators while they are in office, but now occupied by a mixture of lawmakers, other politicians, retired officials and other individuals.

The last known attack by the Boko Haram sect in Abuja was in November last year, when gunmen stormed the Special Anti-Robbery Squad (SARS) police barracks, freeing 30 prisoners and killing two police officers in an attack claimed by Ansaru, a Boko Haram offshoot.

The dead and the injured were taken to the Asokoro General Hospital by policemen in truck and an ambulance around 9:30 am.

A witness who asked not to be named said men in military uniforms suddenly attacked the uncompleted house and randomly killed eight people while many others ran to save their heads in the confusion. There were blood stains on the road leading to the building and in many room and portions of the apartment.

They claimed that the squatters in the uncompleted building, comprising of tri-cycle drivers (Keke Napep) and water vendors, paid a N200 weekly rent to one Joseph, who guards the house.

Weekly Trust learnt that the owner of the house, whose identity was yet to be ascertained as at the time of filing this report, had earlier threatened the squatters to vacate the house, warning that he would use the military on them.

Two other residents in the Zone, however, told *Weekly Trust* that the owner of the house is a 'Military General' (but could not confirm if he was still serving or retired) which warranted the involvement of the soldiers in the operation.

Some of the squatters who



■ Muhammed Adamu (left) and Kamal Abdullahi, two suspected Boko Haram members, speaking to reporters yesterday in Abuja



■ Sympathisers at the scene where people were killed by unknown gunmen at Apo Zone E in Abuja yesterday

survived the attack told *Weekly Trust* that the owner of the house had complained about the squatters and gave them an ultimatum of Thursday next week to leave.

They said they were surprised by the sudden attack this Thursday night only a few days after the warning.

One of the witnesses who gave his name as Muhammad Ulama'u said he escaped being killed by the whiskers as the man sleeping next to him was shot dead immediately he woke up.

Ulama'u said the landlord had demanded the squatters to evacuate his building after he

accused some of them of theft and had them arrested. "Those arrested were released on Wednesday after which the landlord gave them until Wednesday next week to vacate the premises.

"He said he would call in the army as he doesn't deal with the police," Ulama'u who had been squatting in the building for three months, said.

Two days later, the soldiers came at midnight and left eight men dead and about the same number injured.

"Obviously Joseph got wind of the raid and didn't spend the night at the building," Ulama'u said.

A magazine with markings of

the Nigerian Army was recovered by rescuers who thronged the scene to render assistance to the victims after the soldiers had left. The magazine was handed over to the chief of Garki, who was said to have handed it over to the DPO.

The police did not arrive the scene until some eight hours after the incident. And later soldiers returned and took over the scene from the police while arrangements were being made to evacuate the remains of the victims.

However, the SSS yesterday in a press release, signed by its spokesperson, Marilyn Ogar hours after the incident said: "In the early hours of today 20th September, 2013, about 0030 hours, a combined security team went for an operation behind the Apo legislative quarters.

"The operation was sequel to information obtained from two (2) Boko Haram elements Kamal Abdullahi and Mohammed Adamu, who had earlier been arrested for terrorist activities. They led the security team to uncompleted buildings where arms were purported to have been buried underground."

She said: "No sooner had the team commenced digging for the arms, than they came under heavy gunfire attack by other Boko Haram elements within the area, which prompted immediate response from the security team.

As a result, some persons were injured and twelve (12) others have been arrested in connection with the incident, and are making useful statements. Normalcy has returned to the area. Members of the public are advised to go about their normal businesses, as appropriate security measures have been emplaced to ensure the safety of citizens in the FCT.

"We want to reiterate the need for all Nigerians to be vigilant of their immediate environment and promptly report suspicious activities to security agencies. Our National security must remain the collective responsibility of all Nigerians."

Also speaking to newsmen at the scene of the attack, Mohammed Adamu admitted to being a member of the Boko Haram sect operating in Abuja.

He confessed that he helped facilitate meetings at the house by conveying members on his "keke napep" to the uncompleted building and would often act as a look out for trouble when meetings are on-going inside the house.

Adamu told reporters that one Sulieyman (alias R-Kelly) an indigene of Yobe State is the leader of the sect and would pay him N5,000 every week for the job.

He said the guard of the house was also paid to allow the meeting to take place in the house and that Sulieyman, Imran and Ibrahim who are all members of the 'Boko Haram' cell escaped with their guns yesterday during the attack by the security forces.

Some suspects arrested insisted they were not Boko Haram members, but Keke napep operators, prompting some union officials of the Keke NAPEP association to visit the scene of the attack where they identified Adamu, who was arrested on Wednesday in Garki, Abuja by the SSS operatives.

Adamu who had earlier said he was arrested and had his mobile phone (GSM) searched by the SSS operatives before he was lead yesterday to the scene of the attack, added that the soldiers were shot at before they (soldiers) returned fire.

An elder of the community who briefed *Weekly Trust* in detail of the incident, however said though they are not backing the Boko Haram members, it is not fair that the security operatives shoot indiscriminately leading to possible killing of those who were not members among the eight.