

THE WORLD NEWS II

73 Boko Haram fighters posing as herders killed

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Chadian soldiers push a military pickup truck out of the sand near the front line in the war against Boko Haram insurgents in Gambaru, Borno.

.Chadian soldiers liberate Dikwa

At least 73 Boko Haram militants who disguised as herdsmen with the intention of invading Konduga town in Borno State were yesterday killed by troops from the 7 Division of the Nigerian Army.

A senior military officer said in Maiduguri that a suicide bomber who drove a Volkswagen Golf car was also shot dead before he reached a military location in Konduga.

Credible sources said over 150 militants who took cover behind a herd of cows approached Konduga but were spotted by troops who killed more than half of them while the rest fled.

One soldier was however lost in the encounter, which witnesses said lasted between 7am and 1pm. Amadu Kamilu, a vigilante member from Konduga, said a fighter jet participated in the operation.

"We strongly believe that most of the fleeing terrorists were killed by the jet in the bush," he

said. Another army officer said: "The invaders pretended to be herders looking for pasture. Unknown to them, Fulani herders in this part have been adequately briefed to stay clear of identified red spots because of the ongoing operation.

"Therefore, while they were approaching, there was prior information and our troops stayed alert. And when they came closer, they pushed the cows to one side and started firing in vain because our men were ready for them," he said.

Nigerian troops had in the past six months repelled over 20 attempts by the Boko Haram to capture Konduga which is 40 kilometers from Maiduguri.

The town is seen as very strategic to Maiduguri as it is a gateway to the state capital from Bama, Gwoza and Sambisa Forest from various directions.

In a related development, Chadian troops yesterday liberated Dikwa town, also in central Borno State which was occupied by the Boko Haram for months. Credible sources said it took the Chadians over one week to subdue the militants who had established various cells in strategic places in the ancient headquarters of the Kanem Bornu Empire.

"From the exchange of information available to us, the Chadian forces have today finally taken over absolute control of Dikwa," a security source said. "The emir's palace, the local government secretariat, central mosque and other vital places have all been recovered after flushing out the terrorists," he said.