



■ Impounded trucks loaded with scrap metal in Maiduguri

Photo: Hassan Ibrahim

# Terrorists killed 55 iron mongers in Borno in 3wks – Police

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From Hassan Ibrahim, Olatunji Omirin (Maiduguri), Idowu Isamotu (Abuja), Abdullateef Aliyu (Lagos) & Hameed Oyegbade (Osogbo)

**T**errorists have killed 55 iron mongers in series of attacks in the last three weeks in Borno State, the police said.

The Commissioner of Police in the state, Abdu Umar, disclosed this on the side-line of a security stakeholders' meeting on Saturday in Maiduguri.

The stakeholders comprised the police, the army, Nigeria Security and Civil Defence Corps and the Department of State Security, among others.

According to the News Agency of Nigeria (NAN), the meeting was to proffer solutions to the incessant attacks on scrap metal collectors in the state.

Umar said the insurgents killed 32 scrap metal collectors at Modu village in Kala-Balge Local Government Area and murdered 23 others at Mukdala village of Dikwa LGA.

He said the victims sneaked into the forests 25km away from the towns without informing the security agencies for scrap metal collection.

Daily Trust reports that dozens of youths looking for livelihood especially in northern Borno had been killed by terrorists this year.

The CP said Governor Babagana Zulum directed security agencies to adopt proactive measures to stop the killings to forestall future occurrence of the incident.

The commissioner had also led other security heads and journalists to investigate some impounded trucks loaded with scrap metal at State Mechanic Workshop.

He said there were allegations that the scavengers were involved in vandalizing government and private properties in displaced communities.

"The state government is working to come up with a policy plans to checkmate these activities.

"This is because the government have had bad experience where infrastructure and individual vehicles, especially in liberated communities are being vandalised by scrap metal collectors.

"And it's surprising that the unions said none of the victims in Kala Balge and Dikwa were their members.

"The government is really concerned about the welfare and safety of every citizens, it set up a committee to check these activities with a view to fashioning out ways to forestall future occurrences," he said.

Also commenting, Malam Umar Usman, Chairman, Scrap Metal Association in the state, said the victims of the Kala-Balge and Dikwa attacks were not registered members of the association.

He alleged that the victims were internally displaced persons in the affected communities.

According to him, the association is monitoring activities of over 3,000 registered scrap metal collectors across 27 LGAs of the state.

He also refuted the alleged vandalism of critical infrastructure by its members, saying the association liaised with the security agencies and community leaders before transacting on scrap metals.

A public affairs analyst, Mohammed Abubakar Kareto, said Rann axis had been a flash point for ISWAP/Boko Haram

insurgents for over a decade now.

"The state government and security forces around the area need to swiftly swing into action and address the problem," he said.

**Terrorists planned to bomb Abuja, Kano, other cities-CDS**

The Chief of Defence Staff, Gen. Lucky Irabor, yesterday said the military thwarted plans by terrorists to attack Abuja, Kano and other major cities in the country last week when they killed worshippers at St. Francis Catholic Church, Owo, Ondo State.

He said this when he appeared on Channels Television's special programme, 'Democracy Day: Giving Hope to Nigerians' monitored by our correspondent.

He said operatives averted what could have been the most devastating incident in the history of Nigeria.

He said: "We recovered a large quantum of arms and ammunition and other materials which, of course, the criminals were intending to use in various parts of the country, including Abuja.

"Perhaps, you may not know that just only the same week of the Owo incident, in Kano, for example, given the intelligence available to security agencies, we were able to botch what would have been the most catastrophic incident within our country. In that operation, we recovered Improvised Explosive Devices (IEDs) making materials.

"That the Owo incident happened does not imply that improvements have not happened. Let me state that this is a process, and if you could take a look at the war stage in countries around the world, you'll find incidents of violence and criminality in one way or

the other."

He said there had been quite a lot of improvement as the military and other security agencies were doing all that was necessary to bring peace to the various troubled regions of Nigeria.

"I can tell you that from last year till now, we've had quite a lot of improvement from the North East to the North West, North Central, South South, South East and South West. Of course, there still remains a long haul in terms of addressing the nuances that attend to insecurity in Nigeria."

Irabor asked Nigerians to always trust the military and other security agencies for the war on insecurity to be more effective.

"It's for us to have an understanding that we can't withhold information and expect miracles to happen. Certainly it's not going to happen.

"I'm a victim as well as any Nigerian that is on the street. We're all victims together. There's no one who is on the other side. We are in it together. We're on the frontlines. Trust is not something we need to beg for," he stated.

**Mixed reactions as Owo 'indigene' links attack to 'missed target'**

As investigations into last week's killing of scores of worshippers at St. Francis Catholic Church, Owo, Ondo State, gather momentum, there are mixed reactions over a claim by an indigene of the town that the attack was as a result of a missed target.

The woman had called in on an online show anchored by Blessedom Page run by an Igbo Nigerian immigrant living in Germany, Blessing, who uses her regular show to provide

updates on contemporary happenings in Nigeria.

The National Security Council had linked the attack to ISWAP.

The woman, whose identity was not disclosed, claimed that the attackers were indigenes of the community.

She alleged that the attackers targeted a reverend father who was said to have been invited as a special guest to the church.

She said, "Yes they invited a priest to come and preach, but he did not come. Those people did not know him. So, they were asking the pastor about the priest. Instead of telling them, he did not come, he asked if they had come to kidnap him.

"When they saw that people were rushing towards them, they now threw bomb. It was the bomb that scattered everywhere."

"Those people (attackers) that came are not Fulani, they're indigenes of the land. So, when they came, they were surrounding the church, but nobody knew. They were four in number. So they were waiting for the church to close."

The spokesperson of the state police command, Funmi Odunlami said: "Investigation is still ongoing, we don't want to talk about how far we've gone with our investigation."

A former Assistant Inspector-General of Police, Ambrose Aisabor, in a chat with our correspondent, said the woman appeared bent on discrediting the ongoing investigation by security agencies.

He also said it was too hasty to blame the attack on ISWAP.

Secretary, Miyetti Allah, South West, Abdulmumeen Ibrahim, distanced Fulani from the attack, saying they and the indigenes of Owo and the entire state had been living in peace in recent times.

**S/west governors urged to re-energize Amotekun**

Governors of South West states were yesterday advised to reenergise the Western Nigeria Security Network, codenamed Operation Amotekun, to guarantee security in the region.

President, Odu'a Chambers of Commerce, Industry, Mines and Agriculture, Kayode Adeyemi, gave the advice in a statement.