

Borno Farmers' Killing: Soldiers, Others Missing As Terrorists Ambush Corpses' Recovery Team



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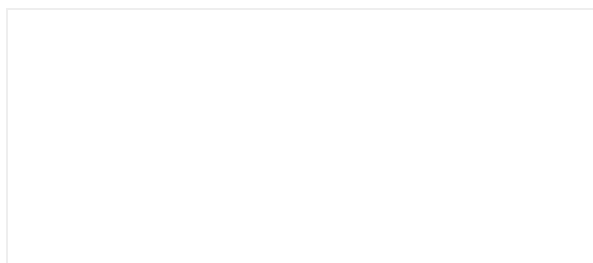
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Terrorists have reportedly ambushed soldiers and civilians on a mission to recover the corpses of 40 farmers killed on Saturday at Dumba in Baga, Kukawa Local Government Area of Borno State.

Security and local sources told our correspondents on condition of anonymity yesterday that the ambush was laid by the Islamic State's West Africa Province (ISWAP) fighters on Tuesday.

The sources said an unspecified number of soldiers and 54 joined civilian forces comprising hunters, vigilantes and members of the Civilian Joint Task Force were still unaccounted for.



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A CJTF member said only one of the 54 personnel and youths drafted into the operation returned to Baga.

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He said the soldiers attempted to repel the attack, but they were overwhelmed by the number and firearms of the terrorists.

On whether there were casualties, he said: “It is still too early to ascertain that because no one has details of what transpired. The only person who returned is not in the state of mind to discuss it”.

However, another security source said some of the reinforcement troops had escaped and returned to their base.

He said the troops came under heavy attack midway to Dumba after they had recovered and buried some corpses.

“They saw corpses of the slain farmers littered on their way to Dumba, they buried 15, but later came under heavy terrorists’ gunfire when they were about to proceed to Dumba.

“Many soldiers and civilians in the first batch have been missing since yesterday (Tuesday). We don’t know whether they are wondering in the bush or abducted by the terrorists,” he said.

Another CJTF member said: “The situation is daring and sad. I cannot give you the figure of those that are still missing, but we pray that they all return safely.

“There were over 70 civilians in the rescue team, but only a few had far returned. They recovered over 60 corpses but they could not bury up to 15 because of the ambush,” he said.

Troops engage terrorists

A fisherman said there was an exchange of fire between the military and the terrorists yesterday evening.

“I also saw fighter jets hovering, supporting the ground troops that were exchanging fire with the insurgents. It was so intense that we had to abandon our canoes and scampered for safety,” he said.

Baga farmers appeals for corpses’ evacuation

The members of the farming community in Baga yesterday appealed to the government to evacuate them to a safer location until security is restored.

They said they only got access to their farmlands and fishing areas after paying “levies” to the terrorists.

Zulum visits Baga, blames military, farmers

Borno State Governor Babagana Umara Zulum yesterday visited Baga to sympathise with residents over the incident.

He commended the military for their resilience in the fight against the terrorist, but blamed them for allowing the farmers into the restricted area.

He also blamed farmers and fishermen for exceeding “safe corridors” into the areas declared unsafe by the armed forces, while calling on them to continue with their legitimate business.

Protect civilians, Amnesty Int’l tells govt

Director, Amnesty International Nigeria, Isa Sanusi, while reacting to the killing of the farmers, said: “The fact that such atrocities remain commonplace shows that more needs to be done to protect civilians and ensure that families of victims receive reparation and justice.”

He stated: “Amnesty International strongly condemns the executions of these civilians which, once again, shows Boko Haram’s utter disregard for the sanctity of human life and for rules of international humanitarian law. Boko Haram must be held to account for its years of atrocities, including war crimes.

“Our findings show that Boko Haram rounded up the farmers and fishermen, separated the men and shot them at close range. Those who attempted to flee were pursued and killed while dozens more were injured. A search for dead bodies is still ongoing while a mass burial is being planned for those killed.

“As well as killings targeting civilians, Boko Haram continues to abduct women and girls and extensively loot property.”