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Blasts rock Kaduna army barracks

WEDNESDAY, 08 FEBRUARY 2012 00:00 FROM SAXONE AKHAINE (KADUNA), MADU ONUORAH, FLORENCE LAWRENCE (ABUJA), ADAMU ABUH (KANO) AND NJADVARA MUSA (MAIDUGURI) NEWS - NATIONAL

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Qaqa 'resurfaces', denies arrest by SSS

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UNDAUNTED by the killing and arrest of its members by security agents, Boko Haram once again expressed its bloodlust by bombing a military barracks and another area close to a bridge in Kaduna State yesterday.

The Nigerian Army stated that the explosion in the barracks was as a result of an aborted suicide bombing.

Though the army authorities said that there was no casualty except the suicide bomber, an unconfirmed report disclosed that three other persons died.

An official with the National Emergency Management Agency in Kaduna, Musa Ilallah, said that "there were two separate blasts." He said rescue officials had been deployed but were being refused access to the area by soldiers.

"From all indications, they gate-crashed into the military barracks," said Ilallah, adding that there was talk of a suicide bomber, but that there was no official confirmation.

Residents said windows at an office complex at the military barracks were shattered. The area had been cordoned, but the office complex could be seen, residents said.

"Virtually all the glass has been shattered," one resident said. "I saw soldiers with glass cuts on their bodies being taken out, but it's difficult to say if there were any (more serious) casualties."

The authorities of the 1 Mechanised Division of Nigerian Army, Kaduna, said that soldiers promptly responded to the situation.

In a statement signed by the Assistant Director, Army Public Relations, Lt.-Col. . Abubakar Edun, he said: "At about 12.18 p.m. on Tuesday, February 7, 2012, a failed suicide bomb attempt was made on the headquarters complex of 1 Division Nigerian Army, Kawo, Kaduna." He said that the two suicide bombers came in two vehicles, a Sienna Toyota space bus and a Honda Accord.

According to Edun, "the drivers of the two vehicles overran the security post and the lawn leading to the headquarters complex", pointing out that "one of the vehicles (Toyota Sienna Space bus) exploded by the car park directly in front of the headquarters when a soldier opened fire on the car after the attacker refused to stop, which made him lose control of the vehicle.

"The second vehicle which did not explode (Honda accord) was loaded with 10 numbers of 20 litres of improvised explosive devices (IEDs), four numbers of 30 numbers loaded with IEDS and two numbers of large peak containers also loaded with IEDS. The suicide bomber in the Sienna space bus died in the attempt, while there was no casualty on the part of own troops."

But the controversy over the arrest of the Boko Haram spokesman, Abul Qaqa, continued yesterday as Qaqa 'resurfaced' and claimed to be speaking on behalf of the group.

Qaqa said in a telephone interview in Maiduguri with reporters that he was not arrested by the State

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Security Services (SSS) last Wednesday. He said that the spokesman that was arrested was Abdul Dadaa i Kaduna.

He said: "My name is Abdul Qaqa, the spokesman of Boko Haram." Qaqa vowed yesterday that his group would continue to target military and police formations and other security agents in the North, until the Sharia legal system was fully established.

He said there would be no dialogue with the Federal Government, until the Sharia legal system was established.

He said: "Before attacking security agents by our foot soldiers and bombers, we urge the people living near t targets to leave the areas, until our operations are completed. And by God's willing, we are winning, until Sharia is fully established in the North."

Speaking on the relocation of Muslims and Christians to their respective states and regions in the country, Qaqa said: "We did not issue that notice to the general public. We can attack in any part of the country as lor as the security agents are our enemies against the establishment of Sharia in the North."

He said the 11 people killed by JTF on January 28, 2012 and the seven killed last Saturday in Shehuri North Maiduguri metropolis were members of the Boko Haram.

He disclosed that the seven persons killed betrayed the group, adding that there were 30 more of such members who would be killed.

The Director of Public Relations, Nigerian Army, Maj.-Gen. Rafael Isa, told journalists at the Army Headquarters, Abuja that soldiers of the Army manning the entrance to the gate of the I Division Headquarte close to the Kawo motor park fired at the suicide bomber who was dressed in a military uniform.

Isa said that "the suicide bomber was the only casualty." But the bomb in the vehicle exploded and shattered the glasses in front of the 1 Division Headquarters.

According to the Army Spokesman, "this morning, reports reaching us from the Headquarters, 1 Division Nigerian Army, Kawo, Kaduna indicate that there was a suicide bombing attempt by someone dressed in military uniform driving in a private car. The soldiers at the Headquarters 1 Division repelled the attack and were able to stop what will have been a suicide bombing at the frontage of the Headquarters 1 Division. However, after firing the suicide bomber who tried to force his way, the bomb exploded and shattered the glasses that adorn the frontage of the headquarters. The suicide bomber was the only casualty.

"Once more, we urge members of the public to continue with their normal businesses and lawful activities. W also enjoin all to continue to partner security agencies and provide valuable information that will help us tack the menace of this misguided Nigerians and any would-be mischief makers. We remain grateful to all members of the public for all the information provided so far that have led to the arrest of key members of the notorious Boko Haram sect recently.

"We know that such attacks might not be unconnected with the arrest of some of their key leaders. We are currently working on fresh information that will lead to the arrest of more sect leaders and their sponsors. Let me use this opportunity to reassure members of the public that this (attack) cannot and will never deter us in our efforts at ensuring that lives and property are well secured and safeguarded by members of the Armed Forces as required of us by the Nigerian Constitution."

Answering a question on whether troops were observing the fundamental rights of the members of the Boko Haram, Isa asked whether what they were doing was not abusing the rights of Nigerians.

He said that "we expect no mercy on the terrorists. And I am not going to encourage any soldier to shake hands with any terrorist in the name of being nice."

Earlier, Chief of the Air Staff, Air Marshal Mohammed Dikko Umar, solicited understanding between the military and the media towards efforts to tackle the problem of insecurity in Nigeria.

Umar said at the Nigerian Air Force Headquarters, Abuja that the media, being "the most vibrant in the world, must see itself as stakeholders in the Nigerian project and ensure that Nigeria moves forward."

Amidst reports that a bomb exploded at the Nigerian Air Force Base, Kaduna, Air Force Spokesman, Air Commodore Yusuf Anas, said that its formation was not affected as a bomb was thrown 50 metres from the gate of the NAF Base, Kaduna, along the Mando Road.

But no fewer than eight suspected Boko Haram members may have been killed by security agents in the Mariri area of the Kano metropolis.

Six others were also arrested after a bloody confrontation between members of the group and the security agents comprising soldiers and mobile policemen. Among the dead suspects was an old woman.

Apparently acting on a tip-off, truckloads of soldiers traced a hideout of the group's members in Mariri, cordoning off the area at about 5.30 p.m. on Monday which was about the time the Sharada police station was set ablaze by the suspects.

A witness said a long-drawn gun battle thereafter ensued between the security agents and the suspected Boko Haram members, lasting till about 3.00 a.m. yesterday.

When The Guardian visited the scene of the incident along Maiduguri road, the affected house was riddled with bullet holes and a much bigger hole from a more devastating firepower unleashed by the security agents.

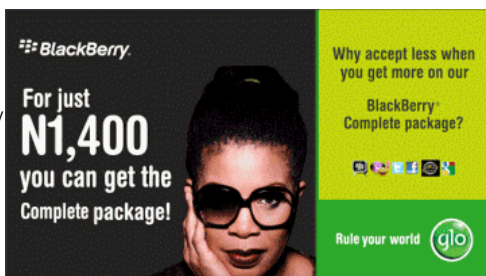
A resident of the area told The Guardian that he saw security agents moving out a dead body from the building and the dismembered remains of one of the suspects.

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Army spokespersons declined comments on the incident but a source within the Kano State police command confirmed that there was indeed a gun duel between security agents and the suspected Boko Haram members, adding that six persons were nabbed in the end.

Besides, the Nigerian Immigration Service (NIS) said it had kept in custody 213 Nigerians and Nigeriens undergoing screening for any related security threat after being arrested by the military and police authorities in Suleja, Niger State on Monday.

The service said that though there was no "Boko Haram suspect" yet, in the face of the ongoing terrorism attacks in the country, profiling them became necessary.

Speaking with The Guardian to confirm the report yesterday in Abuja, the Public Relations Officer of the NIS, Mr. Joachim Olumba, explained that about 120 of those arrested were Nigeriens while others were from different parts of Nigeria like Katsina and Kano.

Yesterday, the police authorities said that the three blasts that rocked the second largest Gambouru market in Maiduguri, the Borno State capital hit a palm oil store and several plastic shops, destroying market wares and goods worth millions of naira at about 3.30 p.m. on Monday.

Fire servicemen and rescue team put off the blasts' raging fire at 6.35p.m.

Spokesman of the Joint Task Force (JTF), Lt.-Col. Hassan Mohammed, told The Guardian on Tuesday that "the fire that gutted the Gombouru market was caused by a faulty grinding machine in the market which sparked off and spread out, burning down many shops and buildings, including palm oil stores. We are in control of the fire disasters in the market, as the fire servicemen have rushed along with their rescue team in putting off the afternoon fire."

Barely 24 hours before the Gambouru market blasts, suspected Boko Haram gunmen attacked two houses in Ummarari, killing two residents at 10p.m. on Sunday, before the JTF rushed to the houses and repelled the gunmen from further attacks and killings. The Borno State Police Commissioner, Simeon Midenda confirmed this.

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#1 amahf 2012-02-08 07:57

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Now that the military have become fully involved in the BH solution, it is better. CAN ALL NIGERIENS BE ISSUED WITH QUIT NOTICE? That will be better still.
I suspect that most of the suicide bombers may be foreigners.

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