

Gunmen kill five kids, seven others in Borno

From Njadvara Musa (Maiduguri)

VIOLENCE continued in Maiduguri, the Borno State capital yesterday as gunmen suspected to be *Boko Haram* sect members moved from Shokari ward to Sulemanti ward of the metropolis, killed five children in two houses and torched Joel Temai's House.

And barely seven hours after the incident, the hoodlums attacked five residences during which they shot dead seven people in

Lawan Bukar ward.

Three of the children killed, according to an eyewitness, Zamdai Dahiru, were of security personnel in the Department of State Security Service (SSS), Adiju Zubairu, but his wife survived the attacks. The throats of the kids were slit by the assailants.

The other two children, the source added, were of Zubairu's neighbour, two blocks from the torched house in Sulemanti area, behind the Central Bank of

Nigeria (CBN) quarters.

Another eyewitness told *The Guardian* that the gunmen came in two unmarked taxis with petrol-bombs and started firing at the house of the security personnel for about ten minutes, before proceeding to another house which they set it ablaze at 2.30am.

"We could not sleep yesterday night as the gunmen continued to fire several gunshots in the area to scare other residents from raising

the alarm," he said.

On the killing of the two other children, he said: "The mother of these kids was not in the house when the gunmen attacked and slit their throats, as the wife went to Ruwan Zafi ward that tragic night. After killing the kids, they set the house ablaze before men of the Joint Task Force (JTF) rushed to the scene five hours after the attacks and killings."

Confirming the multiple incidents, the Borno State Police Command Spokesman, Gideon Jibrin, said suspected hoodlums attacked an area behind the CBN quarters in the night and killed five children between the ages of five and 12.

He said the slain children were from two different parents, adding that the parents had lived in Sulemanti ward for over five years and more people are moving into the area, as some residents have relocated from the JTF black spot areas of Abaganaram, Lawan Bukar, Gambouru, Budum and Gwange wards of Maiduguri.

On whether arrests were made, the police spokesman said none of the suspects has been arrested by either the police or JTF.

The attacked Lawan Bukar, according to a survivor, Banna Aisami, is one of the black spots identified by the

JTF and police early this year.

He said: "Our neighbours were preparing to go to the market and take their children to school when some gunmen attacked three houses and started firing gunshots into the air to scare us. I thought the gunshots were of soldiers patrolling the area, but people started running into their houses for fear of being shot or arrested by soldiers."

He said in three of the houses, five people were shot dead, while three people were caught up in the morning shootouts and hit by stray bullets in the thighs and hips.

It was also learnt that some of the gunmen fled into the neighbouring wards of Abaganaram and Shehuri in Maiduguri before men of the JTF rushed to the scene at 9.00am to prevent further attacks and killing.

Spokesman of the JTF, Lt. Col Sagir could not be reached to confirm yesterday's killings. The Police Public Relations Officer (PPRO) Gideon Jibrin said there were attacks in Lawan Bukar where some residents were assassinated by hoodlums, suspected to be members of *Boko Haram* sect at 8am yesterday.

He said the gunmen went on selective killings of people, without any cause.

Canadian firm set to achieve mandate in power sector

From Oghogho Obayuwana, Abuja

RELIEVED that the fog around the operations of the high grade Canadian energy firm *Manitoba* has now been dispelled by the Presidency, the Canadian High Commissioner to Nigeria Chris Cooter has said the company is now in a position to fulfill its mandate in Nigeria.

Manitoba's broad mandate for the revitalisation of the electricity conundrum in Nigeria include stabilizing the grid, reducing electricity losses during transmission, improving grid security and performance, providing management efficiencies, and providing transfer of skills and expertise to Nigeria.

In a statement in response to *The Guardian* enquiry yesterday on Manitoba's Hydro operations and Canada-Nigeria Economic Relations, Cooter said his government was pleased by President Goodluck Jonathan's "re-affirmation of the Manitoba Hydro International (MHI) contract to manage the Transmission Company of Nigeria (TCN)."

"Canada strongly supports President Jonathan's Roadmap on the power sector. The President has consistently emphasized that getting electricity to Nigerians is vital to the prosperity of the country. That is why the MHI contract matters and no doubt why President Jonathan reaffirmed it this week," he added.

Manitoba Hydro, a company with extensive international experience, was selected for a three-year contract through a

fair, open, and transparent process to transform TCN into a financially sustainable and self-sufficient company in the power sector.

But their operations in the country had been largely stalled by politics leading to reported contract cancellation last week. The supposed invalidation of the contract was later found to be a misleading piece of information.

According to the Canadian envoy, "these are key steps needed for all the other elements of the Roadmap (to fulfilling its mandate), including generation, and to getting more electricity to Nigerians. For Canada, more electricity for Nigeria means a more prosperous Nigeria. That is

very much in Canada's interest as well as Nigeria's."

"We are working hard with the Nigerian Government and private sector to attract Canadian investment under our new Bi-National Commission. To that end, in January, our Trade Minister will come to Nigeria with a delegation of Canadian business investors in many fields, together with educational institutions. This will be a first for us and I am confident that it will lead us to a whole new level in our relationships. The message I am conveying back to Canada is that Nigeria is open for business, and that the Manitoba Hydro contract proves it," Cooter added.

Ogun places embargo on new fuel stations

From Charles Coffie Gyamfi, Abeokuta

To check "indiscriminate" construction of fuel stations in Ogun State, the government yesterday placed embargo on establishment of more of such stations just as it urged prompt release of fund for the Lagos-Ibadan road project.

Also, in a move to check building collapse, the government is set to establish "laboratories" to test all building materials, including soil on which buildings are constructed.

The Commissioner for the newly created Ministry of Physical Planning, Mr. Ade-

Tasks FG on Lagos-Ibadan road project

bayo Fari who spoke in Abeokuta on behalf of the government at a press briefing disclosed that many fuel stations had been established in unauthorised locations within the cities thereby posing serious danger to members of the public.

The Commissioner who stated that the action was part of the government's urban renewal programme, however, explained that anyone who intends to set up a fuel station can "apply to us and all applications will be purely considered on merit".

"Embargo has been placed on construction of new filling stations in the state. We view with concern the high rate of filling stations springing up everywhere. Those with genuine papers will be reconsidered, but we have directed that embargo should be placed on the construction of filling stations for now."

Fari said the government did not intend to change the "character" of the cities in the state, "so we will not demolish the slums, instead we will embark on community renewal" which will include roofing the houses at

such slums at government cost.

The state government commended the Federal Government for its decision to expedite action on the reconstruction of the 106 Kilometre Lagos-Ibadan Expressway.

In a statement by the Secretary to the State Government, Taiwo Adeoluwa, the government said the decision of the Federal Government to revoke the concession agreement and re-award the contract to two construction firms was an indication that it agreed that the road deserves better attention than it was getting.