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How to check *Boko Haram*, by Obasanjo

- Says group backed by wealthy Nigerians, others
- Gunmen kill daughter of slain policewoman, abduct man
- IG assures of peace moves

From John-Alba Ogbodo (Abuja),
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report)

RATHER than just cracking down on *Boko Haram*, the Federal Government should ~~adopt a dual~~ approach to conclusively check the activities of the group, according to former President Olusegun Obasanjo. Obasanjo said more could be done to reach out to the group to find out why its members are carrying out acts of violence.

And gunmen who are still on the prowl in the northern part of the country on Monday killed a 17-year-old daughter of a slain policewoman, Sarah Mala, after she was kidnapped on Monday at Maiduguri, Borno State. A businessman, Al-

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de it executive or legislative. The way the NNPC is run today is not in our collective interest." The TUC president also flayed the borrowing of \$1.5 billion to fund fuel importation saying,

their game again. They have started looking for slush money, which the industry has always brought. This is beginning to play out once again."

Gunmen kill daughter of slain policewoman, abduct man

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haji Ali Budum, was also kidnapped on Monday. But while some security chiefs warned yesterday that the security challenges were pushing the nation to the precipice, others assured that they would be overcome.

Obasanjo who spoke yesterday in an interview with the *Cable News Network (CNN)* noted: "To deal with a group like that, you need a carrot and stick. The carrot is finding out how to reach out to them. "When you try to reach out to them and they are not amenable to being reached out to, you have to use the stick." Obasanjo said President Goodluck Jonathan was "just using the stick in his efforts. He's do-

ing one aspect of it well, but the other aspect must not be forgotten."

Boko Haram that claims to have carried out numerous deadly attacks on mosques, churches and businesses in the northern parts of the country is suspected of having links to al Qaeda.

Obasanjo said he had tried to reach out to *Boko Haram* about a year and a half ago through a lawyer who was acting as the group's proxy, and had asked if they had external backing.

The lawyer told him that the group was receiving support from other Nigerians who have resources overseas or "other organisations from abroad."

"If they had 25 per cent support a year and a half ago, today that support has doubled," the former president said.

Analysts suggest that reaching out to *Boko Haram* may be increasingly difficult because the group has split into differ-

ent factions - some with a domestic focus and others with a more pan-jihadi approach. According to Obasanjo, resolving the issue is key to Nigeria's progress.

"*Boko Haram* undermines security, and anything that undermines security undermines development, undermines education, undermines health, undermines agriculture and food and nutrition security," he said.

International rights group, Human Rights Watch, says *Boko Haram* has killed more than 2,800 people.

Also, in a report published late last year, Amnesty International condemned the increasingly brutal attacks carried out by *Boko Haram* since 2009, but said Nigeria's security forces "have perpetrated serious human rights violations" in response.

But a military spokesman rejected the allegations.

Sarah's daughter's body was recovered by the police at Gambale Road with her throat sliced just like that of her slain mother.

An eyewitness, Ishaku Isa, said: "After the mother (Sarah) was killed on Monday night, the gunmen tied her daughter hands and whisked her away to an unknown destination. As we were expecting the police to identify where the kidnapped girl was taken to, a neighbour called me this morning that she was also killed and her body found on Gambale Road in Maiduguri."

On how Budum was kidnapped, an eyewitness Yusufu

Auta told *The Guardian* yesterday: "We were about paying for the purchases made on Sunday and Monday, when three armed men rushed into Al-haji's office and pointed a gun on his head to surrender by tying his hands to the back and bundled him into an unmarked vehicle and sped off towards Baga Road.

"At about midnight, a call came in from the kidnappers demanding some money as ransom on Ali who is in their custody. They also warned that failure to pay the ransom, would result in Ali's death."

The Borno State Police Command spokesman, Gideon Jibrin yesterday confirmed the death of the girl but denied any report on the abducted businessman.

He added that no arrests were made yet but that the police were investigating the matter.

Besides, it was a moment of home truth yesterday in Abuja as security experts took a critical look at the security challenges in the country and came to the conclusion that urgent steps need to be taken to rescue the country from the precipice.

Speaking in his capacity as chairman of the national security summit with the theme "Addressing Nigeria's Security Challenges for Sustainable Peace and Development" organised jointly by the Nigeria Police and *Vanguard* Newspapers, former Inspector General of Police, Gambo Jimeta, noted that successive governments in the country failed to get the nation's priority right hence

the current spate of security challenges.

"It is neglect that has taken us to where we are today. What we have in Nigeria today in terms of security is self-inflicted. In the colonial days priorities were got right. If you see any country that is in trouble, it is neglect of security. Things are not all right," he said.

Jimeta who was Inspector General of Police under former Military President, Gen. Ibrahim Badamosi Babangida, urged the Federal Government to take urgent steps to address the situation, stressing: "I don't know how many minutes it will take our enemy to overrun the country if we continue this way."

Jimeta, a former Minister of Agriculture and National Security Adviser also expressed concern over provocative utterances of some leaders in the country, adding that government needed to look at the plight of Nigerians.

"Some leaders open their mouths and talk irresponsibly. There is the need for caution and sympathy for the less privileged. The strangulation of people by some organs of government should be considered. Let us put our priorities right and build a robust internal security system. Things are not all right," he said.

He advised that the judicial process in the country should not be truncated while religion should not be used as a cover to commit crime.

The Minister of Interior, Abba Moro, observed that the summit was a demonstration that

most Nigerians were concerned about insecurity in the country. He advised that the gathering should not be just another talk show with nothing to show for it. Consequently, he called on the organisers to come up with pragmatic measures that would address insecurity in the country.

"This is not an avenue for lamentation on the unfortunate neglect of what ought to have been but should be aimed at a pragmatic mechanism for tackling the problem. Let it not be sound and fury," he appealed.

In his address, President Goodluck Jonathan, represented by the Minister of Police Affairs, Caleb Olubolade said time had come for the country to seriously fight insecurity. "The time has come for us as a nation to seriously rise up and address the security challenges confronting the nation. In this respect, the government, security agencies, stakeholders and other citizens have to work together," he said.

He expressed optimism that the fight against terrorism would yield results. "I am optimistic that the political will being demonstrated by this administration will yield the desired result in the fight against terrorism, improved crime investigation and enhanced public order policing which will guarantee the ultimate protection of lives and property and law enforcement in our society," he said.

Archbishop, Metropolitan and Primate of all Nigeria, Most Rev. Nicholas D. Okoh (right) and former Rector, Ibru Centre and Bishop of Oke-Osun Diocese, Rt. Rev. Abraham Akinlalu, arriving at the Ibru Centre for one week Bishops conference ...yesterday.

PHOTO: ISAAC TAIWO

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