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Military kills 50 fleeing insurgents

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THE military yesterday claimed to have killed at least 50 insurgents fleeing towards Cameroon in a battle in which 15 of its own soldiers and five civilians also died.

Meanwhile, Borno State Governor, Kashim Shettima was at the Presidential Villa, Abuja yesterday to brief President Goodluck Jonathan on the recent attack on

military barrack in Bama.

The armed forces have stepped up an offensive in the volatile northeast in the past few days, after Boko Haram fighters armed with grenade launchers and anti-aircraft guns attacked an army barracks in the town of Bama on Friday.

Boko Haram is fighting to revive a medieval Islamic caliphate in today's religiously mixed Nigeria, a major oil producer and one of Africa's largest economies.

Reuters quoted the Defence spokesman, Brigadier General Chris Olukolade, as saying the military had targeted insurgents behind Friday's Bama attack and that 20 vehicles used in that raid had been spotted from the air and destroyed.

"Although a good number of the insurgents escaped with bullet wounds, while some have been arrested, over 50 of them died in the course of exchange of fire with ground troops in the operations to apprehend fleeing terrorists," he said.

Thousands have died violent deaths since Boko Haram launched an uprising 2009, but the past few months have been the most violent, with hundreds of civilians killed by the insurgents since August.

Accompanied by his Chief of Staff, Abubakar Abba Kyari, the governor, who briefed State House correspondents after meeting with Jonathan behind closed doors, expressed satisfaction with the military handling of the insurgency. He, however, denied claims that some women and kids are being held hostage by the insurgents.

It would be recalled that the military barrack came under heavy shelling by suspected agents of Boko Haram on Thursday last week, leaving in its trail scores of dead soldiers and wounded others. The incident came on the heels of similar guerrilla attack on the Air Force base in Maiduguri, the state capital.

The governor confirmed that about three women were kidnapped, but that luckily, they escaped. "So is not true that Boko Haram is holding onto women and kids."

On the rumour that the barrack is deserted, he said, it is not true. "I am the man on ground and I can tell you authoritatively what is happening. Women and children, normally during crisis, are moved to safer locations but the soldiers are on ground, they are right now in Bama and are doing their job very well."

On the fear that the end to the crisis seems not in sight, the governor said the Federal Government is doing its best. "I'm just here to brief Mr. President of what transpired in Bama, I believe that very soon, this issue will be frontally addressed and it will be a thing of the past."

In a related development, the people of Foron community living in Jos have accused the Special Task Force (STF) of not being proactive enough in the discharge of their responsibilities, noting that the STF does not have any part-time function apart from defending life and property of the people.

The people spoke to The Guardian in Jos. Their spokesman, Mr. Benjamin Ayuba, said it was highly disturbing that the same Foron district that was attacked on December 17 where a family of six was killed in cold blood, was attacked again on December 23 in the same Foron district, and the same number of people (six) were killed. "What a brutal co-incidence?"

Ayuba argued that instead of stationing some soldiers there permanently after the first attack, the STF abandoned the people to their fate.

But the STF spokesman, Captain Salisu Ibrahim Mustapha, told The Guardian yesterday that they are doing their best for the people. "The truth of the matter is that we cannot


be everywhere at the same time," he said.



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