



Senate Whip relives Katsina killings

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• Suspected Boko Haram fighters sack Borno village

SENATE Deputy Minority Whip, Abu Ibrahim, yesterday gave **graphic details of how 126 people were killed in four Katsina villages in attacks** that coincided with President

Goodluck Jonathan's visit to the state last week.

Briefing journalists in Abuja, Ibrahim said initial investigations showed that the killings were carried out by foreign insurgents who attacked the state on motorcycles armed with AK-47 rifles and helicopters.

The insurgents, he further disclosed, were camped in a Federal Forest Reserve in Katsina South Senatorial District which shares border with Zamfara, Kaduna, Kebbi and Niger states.

And barely 24 hours after Saturday's multiple attacks on Giwa Barracks, Maiduguri in Borno State, gunmen suspected to be Boko Haram insurgents at about 10.00 p.m. on Sunday, struck again, this time at Pela Birni village in Hawul Local Council.

They killed two people and set ablaze houses, including two churches, one belonging to Ekilisiyar Yanuwa a Nigerian (EYN) and the other to Church of Christ in Nigeria (COCIN).

An eyewitness, Musa Anjeli Pela, told The Guardian in a telephone interview yesterday: "I narrowly escaped from the insurgents, as they went about setting several houses and churches ablaze in the village chanting 'God is Great' in Arabic for over two hours.

"The insurgents set the houses and two churches on fire with petrol-bombs and explosives, before killing two of my neighbours here, and fled towards Garkida in Adamawa State."

Pela Birni village is in Kwajafa District of Borno State; and 221 kilometres south of Maiduguri. Figures released by Senator Ibrahim indicated that 57 people were killed in Mararrabar Maigora, 40 in Mai Gora, 21 in Layin Galadima and eight in Unguwar Doka.

His words: "On Thursday morning, I got information of what was going on in my constituency of Katsina South Senatorial District; mainly in two local councils of Faskari and Sabuwa.

"The attacks were going on when a gala night to mark the President's visit was going on.

"On getting the information, I quickly called the Area Commander and the two district heads who relayed what happened. It's been an issue that's been going on for a very long time.

"There's a chunk of Federal Forest Reserve which covers parts of Katsina, Zamfara, Kaduna, Kebbi up to some parts of Niger. The locals claimed that the forest reserve had been taken over

by hoodlums. Originally, people thought they were cattle rustlers or Fulani herdsmen who had been part of the society, for years, even for hundreds of years.

“Skirmishes between farmers in the local villages and Fulani herdsmen have been a known phenomena but this situation was completely different.

“The forest has been taken over by these people; the villagers even claimed that the Fulani herdsmen have been pushed away and at the same time, cattle rustling became a very serious issue.

“All the farmers in the area who own cattle have lost them, they’ve been stolen and some killings have taken place.

“This has devastated some parts of the state, particularly Birnin Gwari area and though the skirmishes have been very serious in the two local councils I mentioned earlier, it has also spread to Kaduna State and even Zamfara State where many people were killed.

“I was there personally, interviewed the village heads and I was told that these people came on motorcycles, armed with Ak-47 rifles and started shooting people.

“There were claims that in one village, they resisted the armed robbery of their cattle and they killed one or two people.

“The reprisal attacks occurred with over 50 motorcyclists, killing from one village to another and what particularly shocked me was that most of the affected villages have been sacked.”

Senator Ibrahim further said that at least eight villages were sacked by the insurgents, adding that if not addressed on time, insurgents from Mali, Libya, Niger and Chad can enter Nigeria and kill at will.

“Reports I got from the Miyetti Allah leadership was that this goes beyond the normal Fulani farmers and cattle herdsmen feud.

“Some of the villagers told me that helicopters even landed in the forest, so it’s beyond the normal skirmishes that have happened between these people for years.

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