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Military Repels Terrorists From Maiduguri Varsity

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• As Gunmen Kill Six Borno Villagers

VIOLENCE has erupted again in Borno State, as gunmen suspected to be members of the Boko Haram sect attacked Malari village. The gunmen shot six residents dead, before setting several houses and a primary school ablaze with Improvised Explosive Devices (IEDs) and petrol-bombs.

The incident took place about 1.35am Saturday.

Malari is on Maiduguri-Bama road; and 18 kilometres east of the University of Maiduguri (UNIMAID) campus. The advancing terror

suspects were, however, repelled from attacking the varsity.

According to residents at the 303 and 202 Housing estates, the repulsion of the gunmen commenced by 1am and continued till dawn with

exchange of several gunshots and firing of six grenades by troops stationed at the varsity gates and Dalori military post.

“Even though there was no loss of lives at the university and the two housing estates, the exchange of gunfire between the

soldiers and gunmen lasted for over three hours. It was ‘deafening and shocking’ with fears that the stray bullets could hit us, as our houses are a few metres to the varsity gates,” said Danjuma Yonana, a resident of the 303 Housing Estate.

Modu Pantami, one of the villagers, who escaped the Malri incident, also told The Guardian that it was God that saved his life, because the gunmen came in several vehicles and motorcycles laden with explosives, and torched several houses and a primary school, before advancing towards

Maiduguri city by 2am Saturday.

He said the attack would be the third in two months. The insurgents had torched 15 houses and huts in February and March, even as they shot and killed five villagers in the second attack, before fleeing into the Sambisa Forest.

“My uncle called me this morning that the terrorists killed six of our neighbours by slitting their throats. The gunmen had tied the victims’ hands to their backs before setting their houses and huts ablaze,” said Pantami.

Speaking on the operation at the varsity gates, the Public Relations Officer (PRO) of UNIMAID, Alhaji Mohammed Ahmed, in a telephone

interview yesterday, said that “there were no attacks or killings on our varsity campus, as the soldiers had already that night taken control

of the three gates leading to the varsity campus for protection of lives and property.

“When the soldiers heard of attacks on a village, at the outskirts of this campus, they swiftly responded by firing several

gunshots and grenade to prevent the insurgents from advancing on this varsity campus that has been protected by soldiers’ and varsity

security guards 'stop and search' exercise at the three main gates, including the varsity Motor Park located on Bama road.

"The students are going to their classes to attend lectures and examinations, despite last night's exchange of gunfire between soldiers and insurgents at 1.35am. I learnt that the gunmen attacked a village, a few kilometres away from this campus; and I was told that several houses and shops were also destroyed last night."

Also, the Borno State Police Commissioner, Tanko Lawal, yesterday in Maiduguri said that one of the villages on Maiduguri-Bama road was

attacked by armed hoodlums.

He said a few villagers lost their lives, while attempting to prevent the hoodlums from torching their houses and shops with petrol-bombs and explosives. He said no arrests had been made.

Meanwhile, the military, Saturday, denied that there was any terrorist attack in Maiduguri. "There was no attack on Maiduguri metropolis as widely reported this morning by some media outlets especially a foreign television channel," a statement routed through the Defence headquarters said.

According to the Joint Information Centre, Counter Terrorism Campaign Northeast Nigeria, "rather, on receiving distress call, troops at about 2am this morning launched a counter attack using mainly mortar shells on a group of terrorists who had attacked and killed four persons in Margimari village and other settlements in the outskirts of Maiduguri. There was no fighting or attack around the University or any barrack in Maiduguri either, as reported."

The statement reads: "Meanwhile, a Chadian, Usman Mecheka operating with the terrorists group around Lake Chad has been taken into custody by the Multi National Joint Task Force. He was apprehended by the Task Force while trying to extract a ransom from herdsmen and farmers in the area, after an earlier attack on the community.

"Troops of the Special Task Force in the Plateau have also raided a camp maintained by an armed gang operating in a settlement in Shendam Local Government Area of Plateau State. A gun fabricating machine as well as some arms and ammunition from the hideout were recovered during the raid. Also recovered during the raid, were local single barrel guns, pistols, an automatic rifle, bullet pellets and a large quantity of materials for producing gun powder."

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