

## NEWS.

# Boko Haram takes over main roads into Maiduguri

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THE Boko Haram sect on Thursday took over one of the main routes into Maiduguri, the Borno State capital, forcing motorists to travel in circles by taking over 12 hours for journeys that normally would take two hours.

Travellers to the southern part of the state had to go through Maiduguri and Damaturu Road into Gombe State to reach their respective destinations.

Motorists and travellers also complained that journey was tortuous and stressful even as the danger of insurgency attacks was not totally ruled out from the other route, which they were forced to take.

The Guardian also gathered that many motorists and passengers on the 187-kilometre Maiduguri-Damboa-Biu Road were left to make a U-turn as they were attacked at different spots and abandoned villages.

Some residents of Molai, 15 kilometres from Maiduguri lamented that they had seen many vehicles that had travelled on this road returned with several corpses.

The attack on Bulabulin Ngaura on Monday sent the whole of Maiduguri panicking as residents thought the terrorists were heading into Maiduguri metropolis.

Some residents of Maiduguri had to stay off the streets, by picking up their children from schools and closed their businesses abruptly.

There was also a deadly confrontation between the military and the insurgents last Friday at Damboa, which claimed the lives of over 70

people, the military, police and insurgents.

This attack, according to some local residents, led the military to vacate its base in the town since then. But sources revealed that the bid to reclaim it was, however, disastrous as the soldiers who left Maiduguri on the task were confronted by insurgents.

The soldiers were said to have been ambushed resulting in some deaths and injuries on Wednesday.

Even though the level of casualties could not be ascertained as at the time of filing this report, but it was heavy on the part of the military.

The Guardian also learnt from sources that 200 troops were sent on the operation to reclaim the base from the insurgents who overran it and eventually took over a few days ago.

Unknown to the military, the insurgents were well -prepared and had dug trenches where many of their heavily armed gunmen lay in ambush.

As soon as the soldiers were sighted, the insurgents opened fire from their trenches and killed some soldiers. Others were compelled to beat a retreat.

On the dangers of the Maiduguri-Damboa-Biu axis, Mohammed Jidda, the Chairman of the youth vigilance group popularly called Civilian JTF in Molai village told journalists that about 60 settlements stretching a distance of 187 kilometres had been deserted with the residents fleeing to Maiduguri for safety.

He said apart from Molai and Dalwa, the axis remained partially deserted, which is about five kilometres from his town, the entire communities up to Biu town had been deserted.

He said: "Apart from Mule and Dalwa that is partially-deserted and are only occupied by the aged and handicapped, people who are not always the target of the marauding insurgents, every other community numbering over 60 had been deserted."

Maiduguri to Biu is 187 kilometres and investigations revealed that Damboa, the largest town between the two towns of Maiduguri and Biu, a distance of 87 kilometres away from Maiduguri, is equally partially-

deserted.

The sad event in the areas have also led to rising levels of Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) in Maiduguri and its environs; which at present stands at 130,000 people, according to Northeast zonal National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA).

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