

NEWS.

Scores of residents feared killed in attack on border community

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• **Lake Chad military chiefs meet over insurgency**

• **'How to disarm Boko Haram gunmen'**

VIOLENCE continued in Borno State Monday as suspected Boko Haram gunmen in a convoy of Toyota Hilux vehicles and motorcycles attacked Damasak town with Improvised Explosive Devices (IEDs), killing scores of residents fleeing their houses to Niger Republic and into the river by 7am.

Damasak is a border town with Niger, and 187 kilometres north of Maiduguri, the state capital.

The attacks came as the fourth meeting of military and security chiefs from the Lake Chad Basin Commission (LCBC) and Benin Republic began in Abuja with Nigeria's Minister of Defence, Lt Gen Aliyu Gusau Mohammed, urging member nations to forge closer collaboration towards curbing the violence of the Boko Haram insurgents.

The gunmen, according to Multinational Joint Task Force (MJTF) sources yesterday in Maiduguri, also torched and looted several houses and shops before the soldiers rushed to the border town by 11.45pm yesterday.

"I cannot give you the exact number of people killed today here in Damasak, but many people were killed while fleeing into the river and to Gashigar and Diffa town for safety. The gunmen used IEDs and petrol bombs in attacking this town in the morning, while most residents are still in their houses," said the MJTF source yesterday.

Confirming the yesterday's attack, Senator Maina Ma'aji Lawan said one of the border towns in the Borno North Senatorial District was attacked on Monday by suspected Boko Haram Islamic militants with many residents killed, while others fled to Niger and into River Kumadugu for safety.

Lawan, in telephone interview yesterday, said: "The residents of Damasak, a border town with Niger, are in confusion with sporadic gunshots and looting of shops and houses. The reports I am receiving, as I speak to



you, indicated that a lot of houses and shops there were set ablaze by insurgents that struck on Monday morning. Most of the gunmen dressed in military uniform to disguise as Nigerian soldiers that have come to protect Damasak, only to launch multiple attacks on this border town with a population of over 250, 500 people."

On whether soldiers were there before yesterday's attack, he said: "The firing powers of the gunmen overwhelmed our soldiers in the MJTF, so what they did was to flee the town for safety like the residents that fled into Niger and river this morning."

The attack and killings in Damasak came after the killing of about 48 fishermen and traders at the weekend by the same insurgents at Doron Baga, 155 kilometres east of Damasak, the headquarters of Mobbar in Borno State.

The meeting of military chiefs is expected to work out specific agreements to implement the institutionalisation of common military structure, including the Multinational Joint Task Force (MNJTF) for defeating Boko Haram and other criminal and violent groups within the region.

The two-day meeting is being attended by Ministers of Defence, Chiefs of Defence Staff, Heads of Intelligence and Security agencies of Lake Chad Basin nations (Nigeria, Chad, Niger, Cameroon), Benin Republic and representatives of the United Nations agencies.

The third meeting of the body took place from July 22 to 23, 2014 in Niamey, Niger.

Stating that the forum is “a step further in the on-going fight against terrorists and criminal elements”, Gen Mohammed noted that “terrorists do not recognise or respect international boundaries as such carry out their acts both within and across national boundaries. Without mincing words, the global security threat is very high, an extension of it felt here in our region by the dastardly acts of Hoko Haram. This has led to instability, underdevelopment and untold hardship to our citizens. In this regard, we condemn the reprehensive and atrocious activities of Boko Haram in our countries.”

Meanwhile, the wife of the Vice President, Hajiya Amina Namadi Sambo, has challenged the Miyetti Allah Cattle Breeders Association (MACBAN), Women Wing, to use its feminine power of persuasion to disarm and end the Boko Haram

insurgency in the North.

Hajiya Sambo described the women wing of MACBAN as vital tool in

tackling the current insurgency in the country due to their feminine power of persuasions, advice and counsel which they bear on their husbands on how best to go about resolving disputes without resulting into conflict.

The Vice President’s wife gave the charge in her speech at a one-day collaborative meeting between MACBAN in the 19 Northern states, Federal Capital Territory and the National Commission for Nomadic Education (NCNE) held yesterday in Kaduna.

Hajiya Sambo, who was represented by the Kaduna State First Lady, Hajiya Fatima Ramalan Yero, remarked that women naturally are peace lovers and peacemakers, urging them to channel their efforts at resolving conflicts and disputes between Fulani and others.

“You should be in the vanguard for peace and always explore peaceful resolution to any dispute, before it escalates into violence. I would also want to urge you to give girl child education the attention it deserves, send your girl child to school, so that they can be educated and fit into the continuously changing world.

“We have seen the impact made by the few Fulani women that are educated. If many more are given the chance, some of the fundamental challenges facing the Fulani as a people will be reduced to the barest minimum, if not completely overcome,” the vice president’s wife said.

It was also learnt yesterday that the 300-housing units for Borno teachers the foundation of which laid by Vice President Namadi Sambo in February 2013 were prevented from completion by the state government by the Boko Haram terrorists’ activities that cut supply of building materials to the Maiduguri project site.

The Project Supervisor, Dauda Buratai, made this known yesterday in Maiduguri, while briefing Governor Kashim Shettima on the non-completion of the Dr. Shettima Ali Monguno Teachers’ Village on Pompomari dual carriage way, Maiduguri.

He said the teachers’ housing project could have been completed long ago, but for the insurgents who cut off supply of building materials to complete the estate.

His words: “The insecurity on roads in Borno, caused by activities of insurgents in the last two or three years has cut off supplies of laterite mostly sourced from an area affected by insurgency outside the state capital, Maiduguri.

“Unlike other over 2,000 housing units at near completion levels, despite commencing at latter period, houses at the teachers village are being constructed with bricks as requested by Vice President Sambo

during his inauguration with his reason being the need to create more job opportunities and training of youths in bricks making and assembling in line with Governor Shettima's vision on housing for all by 2015."

Buratai however noted that despite the cut in supplies of building Materials, 131 units of two bedroom flats have been fully completed and ready for commissioning while 108 are at completion stage and others stalled due to the problem he listed to the governor.

He informed the governor that the Committee in charge of the project has decided to use sand as an alternative so as to speed up the completion of the housing project, noting that the buildings would still be of high standards.

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