

## National

## Four die, six wounded as troops, terrorists clash in Borno

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(Abuja)

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am



Nigerian Soldiers

### Malaria kills more in state than all diseases combined, says WHO

Four persons, suspected to be soldiers, were reportedly feared dead while six others seriously injured when troops of the 152 Battalion, 21 Brigade of the Nigerian Army on Operation Lafiya Dole engaged some suspected Boko Haram terrorists in Borno State.

The terrorists also suffered heavy casualties as they lost some of their members during exchange of gunfire that ensued.

A source told The Guardian that the troops suffered the unexpected loss when they went on a clearance operation at Banki-Bula-Yobe Road in Bama Local Council of Borno State.

The soldiers, it was gathered, died when their vehicle stepped on an Improvised Explosive Device (IED) buried by the terrorists on the road.

The Army spokesman, Brig.-Gen. Sani Usman, who confirmed the development in a statement yesterday in Abuja, did not link the dead casualties to soldiers.

He said the troops were on escort duties of some civilians from Banki to Maiduguri when they encountered suspected Boko Haram terrorists who were laying ambush on the route.

“Although the troops successfully cleared the ambush after a heavy fire fight, regrettably, four persons lost their lives when their vehicle stepped on a buried Improvised Explosive Device on the road,” Usman said.

The statement said 12 persons, comprising six soldiers, two civilian JTF and six Internally-Displaced Persons (IDPs), sustained various degrees of injuries.



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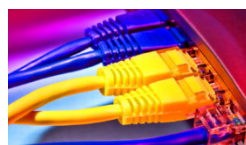
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WHO yesterday noted that following an eight-year conflict in northeastern Nigeria, two-thirds of health facilities had been completely or partially destroyed, leaving some 3.7 million internally-displaced persons (IDPs) at risk of life-threatening diseases.

Consequently, the organisation said it launched a special campaign in the state recently aimed at rapidly reducing the malaria burden among young children, while at the same time protecting them against polio.

Director of WHO's Global Malaria Programme, Dr. Pedro Alonso, told journalists: "The campaign was launched in July at the onset of the rainy season. By the end of the second monthly round, WHO and partners had delivered both anti-malarial medicines and polio vaccine to about 1.2 million children in five local councils of Borno State (about 60 per cent of the total under-five population). A third campaign cycle kicked off in mid-October and is expected to again reach all children under five in the targeted areas. A fourth and final monthly round is planned in mid-November."

Alonso said based on confirmed data and on-the-ground intelligence, the WHO took swift action. He said in collaboration with the Borno State Ministry of Health, WHO developed a framework that aimed to dramatically reduce malaria mortality in the region, particularly among children under five.

Recommended actions, Alonso said, include: preventing malaria through the use of bed nets and by spraying insecticides on the inside walls of shelters; treating malaria by expanding access to health facilities for at-risk populations; and improving data collection through strengthened surveillance systems.

Alonso said as part of the initial response, the framework also recommends the use of monthly rounds of age-targeted mass drug administration (MDA), a WHO-recommended approach for rapidly reducing malaria mortality and morbidity in complex emergency settings. Through MDA, all individuals in a targeted population are given antimalarial medicines (often at repeated intervals) regardless of whether or not they show symptoms of the disease.

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