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SundayNews

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11 die as security agents, Boko Haram clash in Okene

By Foluso Felix (Loköja)
and Chinwendu Nnadozie
(Minna)

ELEVEN people including a soldier and an operative of the State Security Service (SSS) were killed in Okene in Kogi State on Saturday in a deadly shoot-out with some terrorists in the area. The gun battle, which lasted the entire day, was characterised by the intervention of an Airforce Apache Helicopter that sought out the bandits who took to hiding on the rocks.

Major-General Alphosius Chukwu, who led a combined team of the Rapid Response Squad (RRS), said the operation followed the raid on a building where bombs are being manufactured. He said that, in the ensuing confrontation, nine of the terrorists were killed before the remaining ran up on to the surrounding hills from where they kept firing.

Following the intensity of the shooting, the Army Chief directed the Airforce to provide the aerial combat support. At about 5 p.m. some of the terrorists had climbed to the mountain top to continue shooting.

Governor Idris Wada has

assured that the situation is under control, even as he commended the security operatives for their bravery. The governor visited the Federal Medical Centre in Loköja, the state capital, where three men of the SSS who were wounded during the battle were on admission. Various explosive making items, including two pistols and a police magazine jacket were recovered from the building located within Obeira area of Okene.

In a related development, residents of the NITECO and Peter Sariki roads in Minna, the Niger State capital, were on Friday night thrown into panic as gunshots from the combined team of the Anti-terrorism Special Squad (ASS) guarding the area reverberated through the neighbourhood. The ASS operatives reportedly fired a shot into a couples' car to force the occupants of a Peugeot 406 to a halt after initial order for the driver to stop the car was not heeded.

Sunday Independent gathered that the incident, which occurred at about 10:30 pm, led to the lone bullet hitting the man's wife, Safiya, whose husband, Mallam Mohammed Kabir,

works with the Kaduna Depot of the Nigeria National Petroleum Corporation (NNPC). Eye witnesses told *Sunday Independent* that the couple, who happened to be visitors to the area, was driving through the heavily manned road by the ASS were ordered to stop but to no avail.

The couple who were driving in an ash coloured Peugeot 406, it was gathered, consciously or unconsciously failed to stop, prompting an ASS operative to open fire at the car and in doing so some of the bullets which had destroyed the front screen of the car hit his wife in the neck. It was gathered that immediately he saw blood gushing from the wife's neck as a result of the impact, Kabir started shouting in Hausa, saying, "Sun kashe mata na, sun kashe mata na," meaning, "They have killed my wife."

His cries, our correspondent learnt, attracted the passers-by and residents of the area, including those who were already asleep. Some panicky residents were said to have gone into hiding while some moved closer to the scene of the incident to ascertain what was amiss. The residents were relieved to

learn that the gun shots were those of the AAS and not from terrorists. They also discovered that Safiya was still alive.

She was then rushed to an undisclosed hospital outside the Minna metropolis. As at the time of filing this report, she had been rushed to two private hospitals where the doctors and nurses on duty rejected her because the patient carried a gunshot wound.

It was learnt that some top security officers who had arrived the scene immediately the news of the gunshot reached them escorted the injured woman to the Minna General Hospital where she was 'stabilised' before being transferred to Abuja in the early hours of Saturday due to her critical condition after losing a reasonable amount of blood, coupled with the discovery that she was pregnant.

Our correspondent further gathered that the rifle used by the man who opened fire at the motor was seized and subsequently arrested by the other men on duty and handed over to the police, just as residents rained abuses on the security men for what they described as their 'over-zealousness'. Police Public Relations Of-

ficer (PPRO), Niger State Police Command, ASP Richard Adamu Oguiche, could not be reached to confirm the shooting as all his mobile telephone numbers were "unavailable" as at the time of filing this report.

However, a Senior Police officer who preferred anonymity confirmed to our correspondent that one of the ASS members had shot a woman in error.

Contrary to the alarm raised by Mohammed Kabir that his wife had been killed, the police officer said the woman was not dead but in critical condition and was receiving treatment in an undisclosed hospital in Abuja. It will be recalled that members of the ASS were drafted to some strategic areas in Minna following the rumour of attacks on the capital city by the extremist Islamic religious group, *Boko Haram*.

The serious security scrutiny has attracted both commendations and condemnations from residents of the capital city as they were yet to come to terms with the reality on the need to cooperate with the ASS to guarantee security of lives and properties.

Confusion in Imo over Okorocho's 4th tier govt.

By Innocent Anoruo
Production Editor

• NULGE, politicians kick, vow to resist system

PERHAPS, the idea by Governor Rochas Okorocha, of

can only be found in Imo State

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