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Explosions kill 37, injure 23 in Biu



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Thirty-seven people were killed and 23 injured in Biu, South of Borno State at noon on Tuesday, following multiple blast near checkpoint, with the Army engaging members of the dreaded Boko Haram sect in a gun duel.

A youth vigilante in Biu said the incident happened at a neighbourhood known as Yamarkumi along Maiduguri road.

“There were three explosions in Yamarkumi here in Biu town. Many people have been affected; the casualty figure from what we are seeing now have surpassed that of the market suicide bombing that occurred last Thursday. Ambulances are rushing in and out for now. We will give details later,” said the source, who asked not to be named.

Effort to get a confirmation of the incidence from both the Police and military authorities failed. However, a security source at the 7th Division of the Nigerian Army, Maiduguri said, the matter had been reported and the

military operatives were already embarking a full scale action in the area.

In another development, three persons have been confirmed dead in a suicide bomb attack on a restaurant in Potiskum, Yobe State.

The Police Public Relations Officer, Toyin Gbadegesin, who spoke on the telephone to journalists on Tuesday, said the bomber blew up himself and two others at the Alamin Restaurant along Damaturu Road in Potiskum.

The incident, according to him, occurred around 2.20 p.m. on Tuesday, adding that those injured and the dead had been taken to the Potiskum General Hospital.

The PPRO said 12 others were currently receiving treatment, having received injuries from the blast.

A hospital source, who did not want his name in print, said on telephone that 13 persons were brought to the hospital injured and that three corpses had been deposited in the morgue of the hospital.

It was also reported that Cameroon's Army has killed 86 Boko Haram militants and detained 1,000 people suspected to have links to the Islamist group, as central African leaders held talks on how to combat the bloody insurgency.

The country's defence ministry spokesman, Didier Badjeck, who disclosed this on Monday, also said five Cameroonian soldiers were also killed during the clashes in the Waza region near the border with Nigeria.

Nigeria-based Boko Haram insurgents have widened their attacks to neighbouring nations, notably Cameroon and Chad, in a conflict estimated to have claimed a total of 13,000 lives since 2009.

Representatives of 10 nations, meeting in the Cameroonian capital, Yaounde, on Monday under the aegis of the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS), urged the international community to provide more support in the fight-back against the insurgents.

"We have to eradicate Boko Haram," said Cameroon's President Paul Biya, as attendees pledged to create a 76-million-euro (\$86-million) fund to fight the group.

Biya declared that Boko Haram's utter disregard for human dignity meant "a total impossibility of compromise" but added that the fight against terrorism was not a "crusade against Islam".

Nigeria, where elections have been postponed by six weeks until late March because of Boko Haram activity in swathes of the northeast, was absent from the talks as it is not an ECCAS member.

The aim of Monday's discussion was to come up with "an agreed solution" on the fight against the extremists, a source close to the Cameroonian government told AFP.

Chad, Cameroon, Niger and Nigeria have formed a military alliance to combat the notoriously brutal militants, who are fighting to create a hardline Islamic state.

A Cameroonian army official announced that more than 1,000 people suspected of being affiliated to Boko Haram were being held in the town of Maroua, in the country's Far North region, where more than 2,000 Cameroonian soldiers had been deployed since August last year.

"At the moment, the prison of Maroua is holding more than 1,000 Boko Haram (suspects)," said Colonel Joseph Nouma, commander of a local operation to combat the Islamist militants.

The detentions came as police in Niger said they had arrested more than 160 people suspected of having links to Boko Haram in the country's Diffa region, a border area with Nigeria which was attacked by the Islamist group this month.

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