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Boko Haram Kills 19 In Borno Village

Our Correspondents

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Local farmers in Alau, a farming village located some 7km away from Maiduguri, Borno State, said yesterday that they were forced to flee their homes Sunday night after gunmen believed to be Boko Haram attacked and killed 19 people and injured several others.

The incident came barely 24 hours after the news of a similar attack that claimed 15 villagers in Gashigar, a border town near Niger Republic, last week, was reported.

A senior security person who pleaded anonymity also confirmed the attack to LEADERSHIP.

According to fleeing farmers who spoke on phone to journalists in Maiduguri, the gunmen invaded the village about 10pm and began to shoot sporadically at villagers who ran into surrounding bushes, some with bullet wounds. The gunmen also set ablaze several homes and looted their food items.

According to Yawale Aji, a local tomato farmer, "we have lost 19 people to the attack. We buried 17 at noon but we later found two bodies in the bush and we just finished their burial".

He narrated what happened: "They came in about 10pm yesterday (Sunday); they were driving six pickup vans filled with young men chanting 'Allahu akbar' (God is great); others were on motorcycles.

"Those of us who noticed their arrival earlier were able to escape, but several of our colleagues who were already asleep couldn't make it before the gunmen caught them and shot at them.

"They burnt over a hundred houses, and left with 10 vehicles belonging to our people. Several women and children were found seriously injured."

Aji added that "after we had buried our killed colleagues, we had to flee the village because we cannot risk being attacked again. Our food stores have been looted by the gunmen too".

It was learnt that farmers from other neighbourhoods have also begun to flee their homes in anticipation of possible attacks from the Boko Haram.

The police public relations officer in the state, Gideon Jibrin, promised to get back to journalists when he was contacted for comments, though he said he was yet to receive such signal at the time of inquiry. He couldn't get an official confirmation at the time of filing this report.

Residents of Gashigar, a village that shares boundary with villages in Niger Republic, told the Hausa Service of the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) that seven persons were killed and over 60 shops and eight vehicles were burnt when the gunmen attacked the area Sunday night about 10pm.

Also confirming the attack, the spokesman for the 7 Division of the Nigerian Army, Col. Mohammad Dole, said that the insurgents were sighted in that general area by the locals.

The attack on Gashigar came about four days after a similar one was launched on two neighbouring villages where the same gunmen attacked and killed five persons.

Auto crash claims 11 JIBWIS in Minna

Eleven members of an Islamic group travelling through Minna to Kebbi State were killed in an auto crash along Minna-Suleja road Sunday night.

The members of Jamatu Ilzalatul Bidia Wolkamati Sunnah (JIBWIS) were coming from Abuja after attending a programme.

The unit commander of the Federal Road Safety Corps (FRSC) in Suleja, Edwin Nwokike, confirmed the incident.

He said the accident occurred between a Toyota Hiace bus conveying members of JIBWIS heading to Zuru in Kebbi and a Volkswagen Golf car moving from Minna to Suleja.

According to him, the two vehicles were overspeeding before having a head-on collision, as they tried to avoid potholes on the roads.

Nwokike disclosed that the driver of the Golf car was alone and died on the spot, while nine passengers in the Toyota bus also died on the spot, but one other person died in the hospital.

He said nine people injured have been treated and discharged but one was still receiving treatment.

As New Service Chiefs Take Over: We'll End Insecurity Before April – New CDS Badeh

The newly appointed chief of defence staff (CDS), Air Chief Marshal Alex Sabundu Badeh, has re-awakened the hope for a terror-free nation and a lasting peace in the troubled north-eastern region of the country. He said that security forces would end the spectre of insecurity in the region before April in order to avoid constitution problems.

Badeh made the declaration at the a ceremony to mark his taking-over as the 14th CDS at the Defence Headquarters in Abuja yesterday. On the same occasion, the outgoing chief of army staff (COAS), Lt. Gen. Onyeabor Azubuike Ihejirika, handed over to his successor, dismissing media reports that the appointment of a new COAS, Major General Kenneth Tobias Jacob Minimah, would lead to mass retirement of senior officers.

Badeh, who is the immediate past chief of air staff (CAS), took over from Admiral Ola Sa'ad Ibrahim at the impressive ceremony. He said substantial progress has been recorded in the war against insurgents in the north-east region, adding that Nigerian armed forces have also recorded victories outside the country in places like Mali and Guinea Bissau.

Said the new CDS: "I shall do my best to guide the armed forces. When there is crisis, it is not the armed forces alone that go to war but the entire nation. If military operation is not coordinated as a joint service, it will be difficult to involve other stakeholders.

"The security situation in the north-east must be brought to a complete stop before April 2014. We must bring it to a stop before that April, so that we will not have constitutional problems on our hands. We don't want to go back to Senate to start begging and lobbying."

He added: "If we do our work cohesively, I can tell you General Minimah, you will finish your work in no time. I can assure you that the CNS and CAS will give you all the support you need. I can say confidently that this war is already won."

Badeh had earlier handed over the leadership of the Nigerian Air Force (NAF) to his successor, Air Vice Marshal Adesola Nunayon Amosu, at NAF headquarters, after serving for 15 months as the 18th chief of air staff (CAS).

Earlier in his remarks, outgoing CDS Ibrahim said this period is challenging for the armed forces, reminding them to help democracy grow and not to do otherwise.

"We have learnt lots of lessons. Like I often say...by these experiences, our armed forces will come out of these challenges stronger.

"Nigerian armed forces are to help our nascent democracy to grow...not to act in any way to undermine it," Ibrahim said.

For his part, outgoing COAS Ihejirika said media reports about the happenings in the army were incorrect and advised that journalists cross-check their facts to avoid unnecessary heating up of the polity.

Also, at the Nigerian Navy headquarters, the outgoing chief of naval staff (CNS), Vice Admiral Dele Joseph Ezeoba, handed over to the new CNS, Rear Admiral Usman Oyibe Jibrin. The 19th CNS minced no words in warning the sailors against indiscipline as sanctions would be applied accordingly.

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