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Benue, Borno, Nasarawa, Plateau: 5 Policemen, 52 Others Killed In Attacks

By Solomon Ayado, Chibuzo Ukaibe, Kareem Haruna

— March 26, 2014

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Gunmen baying for blood continued murdering innocent Nigerians yesterday. The terrorists killed 55 people in Borno, Benue and Nasarawa states.

After leveling communities of Guma local government area of Benue State including its headquarters, the gunmen yesterday moved to villages in Gwer East local government area of the state and killed no fewer than 25 people.

More than 200 gunmen suspected to be Fulani herdsmen stormed Mbatsada and Tse Agena in Mbalom community of the LGA. The attack which occurred

about 6am lasted several hours before the invaders retreated.

Survivors of the attack said the invaders came when the residents of the community that are predominantly farmers had not gone to farm.

An eyewitness who identified himself as Denen Tyopine said he narrowly escaped death and that "the gunmen had engaged shooting with the residents but overwhelmed them, killing people and leaving them in the pool of their blood".

The member representing Gwer West-Gwer East federal constituency, Dr Christina Alaaga, described the attack as unfortunate and said the killings were unwarranted. She provided shelter for the displaced people and promised that the matter would be reported to the National Assembly.

Some of the corpses of the victims of the attack were conveyed to the mortuary of the Federal Medical Centre (FMC), Makurdi, in two police Hilux vehicles yesterday afternoon. Those injured were moved to the emergency unit of the hospital located at Apir.

Police spokesman SP Daniel Ezeala who confirmed the killings said "the command was yet to ascertain the casualty number" and that policemen had been deployed to the area to enhance peace".

Meanwhile, Benue State deputy governor Chief Steven Lawani has said that the gunmen that are unleashing terror on Benue communities, killing scores of persons and destroying properties and farmlands, are not herdsmen but terrorists of a dangerous group. He stated that the attackers emerged from faraway Borno State and passed through Gombe and Yobe states before landing onto the agrarian state.

20 feared killed in Nasarawa violence

About 20 people including a security operative were yesterday killed at Giza town, headquarters of Giza development area of Nasarawa State, as unidentified gunmen invaded the area.

Several houses, vehicles and other valuables worth billions of naira were also reportedly destroyed by the gunmen who had set them ablaze in the course of their attack on the community.

Giza town is located on the fringes of the Nasarawa/Benue border and is about 45km off the Makurdi-Lafia road. Over the years, the road has been engulfed in farmers/herdsmen feuds, forcing thousands of local farmers on that axis to relocate to safer places.

Areas the farmers deserted in the wake of the prolonged crisis included Gidan Ngur, Kadarko, Azer, Kadarko Rail, Agwan Kuje, Gidan Kwarra and Gidan Kparev. They are presently reported to be taking refuge in places as far as Niger State.

According to an eyewitness, Miss Lami An'legu, the gunmen arrived at the area about 6am yesterday in their hundreds and started shooting sporadically at any object on sight.

She was able to escape from the place by a whisker.

But An'legu complained bitterly that she was yet to re-establish contact with her other siblings, Isa and Sani, as "all efforts at getting across the duo through her mobile phone proved abortive as the response was that the line is currently switched off".

The Nasarawa State police command has confirmed the attack through its public relations officer. PPRO ASP Ismaila Numa, however, said a total of five people were killed during the invasion of the community by the gunmen.

10 killed in Maiduguri suicide bombing attack

Meanwhile, two suicide bombers driving a Volkswagen saloon car yesterday in Maiduguri rammed their vehicle into a police highway patrol van, killing five officers and three civilians, eyewitnesses and security officials said.

The suicide bombers, suspected to be members of the Boko Haram terrorist group, also died in the massive blast that left many pedestrians and commuters injured.

The incident occurred near Dalori Housing Estate situated at the outskirts of Maiduguri along the Maiduguri -Bama highway.

A massive blast from the suicide attack echoed in to the city of Maiduguri about 10am, causing already agitated residents to panic.

Soldiers of the 7 Division, Nigeria Army, had immediately cordoned off the roads leading to the scene of the blast, while a joint team of soldiers and the Civilian-JTF engaged in intensified stop-and-search of vehicles, especially the Volkswagen Golf brand that are normally used for commercial taxis.

Borno State police public relations officer Gideon Jubrin, a deputy superintendent of police, confirmed the incident to journalists on phone.

He said some five policemen attached to the federal highway patrol were killed in the suicide bombing "while three civilians who were also affected died in the blast".

The suicide bombing attack came barely 24 hours after the Boko Haram leader, Abubakar Shekau, in a fresh video, declared a total war on residents of Maiduguri including the security operatives.

Police defuse bomb in Kaduna

What would have resulted in a major tragedy in Kaduna was yesterday averted by the men of the Nigeria Police Force. The men promptly defused a high-calibre improvised explosive devices (IED) packaged in a polythene bag and dropped by a motorcyclist at the ever-busy Sultan by Sir Kashim road in Kaduna North local government area of the state.

Kaduna police public relations officer SP Aminu Lawan confirmed the incident.

According to him, "we got a distress call that a suspected polythene bag containing a questionable substance was dropped by a moving okada man, so we quickly ordered our anti-bomb squad team to the area.

"The area was immediately cordoned off when it was discovered that the polythene bag contained high calibre IEDs, and our anti-bomb squad were able to successfully defuse the IEDs and the area was immediately brought under control.

"As I speak to you now, the area is calm and people are already going about their normal activities; meanwhile, effort to apprehend the suspect is on top gear".

Prior to the detonation, there was pandemonium as people within the area hurriedly closed their shops, while vehicles also took to other routes.

It was also observed that several vehicles ran into each other in an attempt to escape, causing temporary traffic which lasted for some time before the situation was brought under control.

An eyewitness who did not want his name in print said, "When we saw the suspected polythene bag, we tried to see if we could catch up with the *okada man* that dropped it, but he had run far away and we could not catch up with him. It was then we called the police and it was discovered that it was an IED that was contained in the polythene bag," he said.

By press time, normalcy had returned to the area and people were seen going about their normal businesses. Shops earlier closed had been opened.

Northern govts want sponsors of insurgency exposed

In a related development, 19 state governors under the aegis of the Northern States Governors' Forum (NSGF) yesterday reflected on the spate of insurgency in the region and declared that there is a need to identify the sponsors and culprits of the Boko Haram sect.

The governors who met yesterday in Abuja also backed the ongoing confab, noting that they have come up with a common agenda that would put the northern delegates in a better position to tackle the interest and aspirations of the north and the nation at large.

Reading the communique after the meeting, the chairman of the forum and Niger State governor, Aliyu Babangida, said “the crime rate and general insecurity in the region in particular and the country in general are increasingly becoming a growing concern, ranging from mayhem being perpetrated by insurgents characterised by sporadic killings and attacks on schools and communities leading to several deaths and thousands being displaced.

“After exhaustive deliberations, the forum agreed on the following actions: the need to identify the culprits and sponsors of the Boko Haram insurgents and other insurgencies in other places;

“That all member states establish security trust fund in all the various states; and that member states to articulate a coordinated approach towards fighting insurgency in the north.”

In clear support for the ongoing confab, the governors noted that the National Conference was intended to provide a more inclusive and focused forum for candid discourse on the daunting challenges confronting the nation and its citizens such as security, observance of the rule of law and corruption.

Also commenting on the recent symposium organized by the United States Institute of Peace held in Washington DC, USA, recently, the forum said that it provided for a strong platform for meaningful discussion and it also enhanced cooperation that will elaborately address insecurity, social and economic and governance issues peculiar to states in the northern region.

Governors at the meeting included those of Adamawa, Niger, Kaduna, Zamfara, Kwara, Kano, Borno (deputy), Kogi, Jigawa (deputy), Taraba (acting governor) Katsina (deputy) and Kebbi (deputy). Sokoto and Plateau governors were represented by their SSGs.

3 million displaced by insurgency in 3 months - NEMA

The National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA) on Tuesday said that 3 million people were displaced by insurgency in the north-east between January and March this year.

NEMA director-general Mohammad Sani-Sidi made this known at the 7th National Humanitarian Coordination meeting organised by NEMA for donor agencies in the country in Abuja.

Sani-Sidi said NEMA in collaboration with the Red Cross and state emergency management agencies in the affected states, carried out a comprehensive multi-sector rapid assessment of humanitarian situation in the areas.

Represented by Dr Zanna Mohammad, NEMA's director of administration, Sani-Sidi said the assessment was carried out between March 3 and March 7.

“The assessment report findings revealed that from January to March alone, insurgency and other humanitarian challenges have affected more than 3 million people.

“The insurgency left scores dead and displaced more than 249,446 people who are in camps or living with host communities,” he said.

Communal clash: 2 killed, many wounded in Plateau

Two people were yesterday confirmed dead and several wounded in a communal clash at a border between Pankshin and Kanke local government areas of Plateau.

The chairman of Pankshin local government area, Mr Samuel Goar, confirmed the incident to the News Agency of Nigeria (NAN) in Pankshin.

He said the clash was between Ngas and Pai people in Shiwer community of Pankshin LGA and Dokpai community in Kanke council.

The chairman said that mostly affected areas in the crisis include Piri, Tigiya and Irnet villages within the Shiwer and Dokpai districts.

He said that it took the intervention of the security operatives and management of the two councils to stop the clash.

Spokesman of the military Special Task Force (STF) Capt. Salisu Mustapha also confirmed the crisis, saying that soldiers restored normalcy to the communities.

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