



HOME / COVER STORIES / NEWS / GUNMEN KILL 45, INJURE 95 IN TARABA



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Gunmen Kill 45, Injure 95 In Taraba

By Our Correspondents

— July 8, 2014

No fewer than 45 people were killed, 95 injured and 200 houses burnt down in Gashaka, Bashiri, Panwen, Barimini, Sabongida Zaga and Suntai in Bali local government area of Taraba State when gunmen suspected to be Fulani herdsmen invaded a Tiv settlement. Among those killed was the chief of Tiv's representative in Zaki Koti Anyima in Bali LGA.

The police confirmed the incident to LEADERSHIP yesterday.

A resident of Bashiri village, Mr Sam Ngada, who spoke to LEADERSHIP on phone, said that the armed men numbering over 120 invaded the villages at about 1:42am on Saturday after a heavy downpour and engaged in shooting and burning of houses.

Ngada, who said he narrowly escaped the attack, also confirmed to LEADERSHIP that over 55 people were killed by the Fulani, who injured over 95 others and razed down over 200 houses.

He said the invaders were identified to be Fulani herdsmen who had been terrorizing and killing innocent people in the southern part of the state.

"None of us knows what the Fulanis actually want. Three months ago, we all signed an agreement to put an end to all these killings, but we don't know their reason for all these attacks and killings," he said.

When contacted, the spokesman of the state police command, ASP Joseph Kwaji, told LEADERSHIP through a text message that five people were killed by the attackers in Sabongida Zaga and Suntai districts in Bali local government area of the state.

He also confirmed in the message that the chief of Tiv's representative in Zaki Koti Anyima was killed by the attackers.

He noted that the command had since Friday drafted its men to the affected villages while investigation into the matter continued.

Also, when contacted, the chairman of Bali local government, Mr Andy Yerima, told our correspondent on the phone that the crisis in his local government stopped for over a week, adding that the Saturday breach of peace in some villages as reported was in Gashaka local government area of the state.

2015 is the cause of insecurity in Nigeria – Sultan

The Sultan of Sokoto and president-general, Nigeria Supreme Council for Islamic Affairs (NSCIA), Alhaji Sa'ad Abubakar III, said yesterday that the devastating degree of insecurity in Nigeria was simply high-power politics ahead of 2015 political offices. This was just as the traditional-cum-religious leader fingered politicians as the main problem of Nigeria and added that every Nigerian should see himself/herself as a leader who is in the business of ensuring we live in peace.

"We must all come together to fight insecurity," the Sultan stated, adding that Nigerians should learn to separate politics from religion. "As religious leaders, we must be apolitical, but we must also show concern for our leaders who rule us."

The Sultan asked: "All of us claim to be very religious but the question now remains, are we doing what our religions say? Let's take a look at where we are coming from."

Frowning at recent developments where Muslim leaders are always being criticized for not doing enough to curtail insurgency in Nigeria, the Sultan urged people to do research and advise them on what else they should do, since people don't seem to be satisfied with their open condemnation of the acts of insurgency in the country.

The Sultan lamented that he has seen as bad that someone threatens someone whether Christian or Muslim, he is termed a Bala

The Sultan lamented that it has gone so bad that anywhere they see a northerner, whether a Christian or a Muslim, he is termed a Boko Haram member.

Doing a census to determine how many Nigerians from other regions reside in one's domain is simply a waste of time, he said, because "God has a reason for bringing us together and, as such, we should appreciate staying together at all times without discrimination".

"Certain meetings are very important in our lives as leaders. Though all of us are leaders in one way or the other, it should be noted that what we say, do or do not say as leaders matters.

"All of us are in the same boat of ensuring a safe country; therefore, all of us are stakeholders when it comes to helping one another.

"As for those who are saying we should not dialogue with insurgents, I believe that there are issues we must all face. We read, watch and see all what happened elsewhere. All of us are adults; we read what you journalists write, watch on the television screen or listen to the radio; and there is nowhere in the world where the use of force has ended anything related to insurgency. There is nowhere in the world that it has ever worked out.

"We are shedding too much blood of the innocent people who know nothing about leadership, enjoy nothing about the government but suffer the same pain as we do. But we should understand that those causing insurgency in Nigeria are not spirits; they are there. People should understand that Danfodiyo Jihad never forced people to join Islam; he only transformed the way those that claimed to be Muslims were practising the religion. Religion is so important in our lives but it is important for us to come together to collectively tackle the issue of insecurity."

On the part of the Nigeria security and the velocity of the Boko Haram insurgency, Sultan said, "Nigerian security agents are doing their best, just that they have not been used to that before; therefore, we have to pity the condition which the Nigerian security operates. And we have to collectively pray for the end of the insurgency. However, besides the prayers, we must get up and be doing something. We must come together to fight insecurity and, as such, young people have to be nurtured for a better tomorrow to be able to discard provocation."

Bomb blast: 197 traders killed, 137 injured in four months

Worried by incessant bombings of markets, the national president of the National Association of Nigerian Traders (NANTS), Mr Ken Ukoha, has disclosed that about 197 traders were killed while 137 were injured in separate attacks by Boko Haram insurgents in Abuja, Borno and Plateau states within four months.

Addressing a press conference yesterday in Abuja, he noted that the figures were not inclusive of victims of incessant open-fire attacks on traders in Zamfara, Borno, Nyanya, Gombe, Kano and Kaduna even as he said the barbaric act had left traders helpless and sorrowful.

"It would be noted that on 20th March, we lost 16 traders at Ngurosaye village in Borno State; on 20th May, we lost 122 people while 42 were injured at the Terminus Market Jos; on 27th June, we lost 24 people while 27 were injured at the EMAB Plaza bomb blast in the FCT; and on 2nd July, we lost about 35 members while 68 were injured at the Elkanemi Roundabout Monday Market in Borno State."

Ukoha regretted that commercial and economic activities were currently dwindling at a time when the country emerged as the largest economy in Africa, saying that markets were gradually turning to testing grounds for insurgents' missiles and explosives.

Commiserating with the victims, he called on the federal government to take a critical look at the security system by ensuring that the security outfits have not been compromised and infiltrated by insurgents.

Boko Haram: 7 more northerners arrested in Abia

About seven northern Islamic leaders have been arrested by security operatives in Aba local government area of Abia State in a raid at various locations.

The *Hausa service of the British Broadcasting Service (BBC)* reported that the victims including the chief imam of Aba Central Mosque, Malam Idris Bashir, his deputy and five others were arrested in Aba and Cattle Market in Lokpanda respectively for investigation.

Last month, 486 northerners travelling in a convoy of 35 Toyota Hiace buses were intercepted by soldiers of the 144 Battalion in the state and were labelled Boko Haram suspects.

According to the BBC, authorities of the security agencies were yet to comment on the incident at the time filing this report.

Boko Haram: FG denies knowledge of escaped 63 women

The federal government yesterday denied knowledge of the escape of 63 women out of 68 reportedly abducted two weeks ago from three villages around Chibok by Boko Haram members.

The coordinator of the National Information Centre, Mr Mike Omeri, stated this while briefing journalists on government's efforts in the mission to rescue the abducted Chibok girls.

He said, "We are communicating with our people over there to verify this. We still have not been able to verify actually what happened and the figures involved and we don't want to speculate and say things without confirmation."

The commission had earlier denied knowledge of the abduction of 60 women and girls who were said to have been abducted in villages within Borno State by gunmen suspected to be Boko Haram members.

Omeri said, "Landlords must check clearly where their tenants are coming from because, of late, people with dubious character and intentions have moved to new areas and most of the people moving to these areas are the people we are actually looking for. So, know your tenants as you welcome them into your premises," he advised.

Security agencies close to rescuing schoolgirls – Omeri

Omeri also said that security agencies were getting close to rescuing the over 200 schoolgirls abducted from Chibok, Borno State, on April 14, *Channel TV* reports.

Omeri stated this while briefing the press yesterday in Abuja on the security personnel's rescue efforts.

"Security intelligence efforts had led to several arrests which would assist the security agencies in the rescue operation and in the fight against insurgency," he added.

'80% Boko Haram attacks unreported'

A staggering 80 per cent of terror attacks by the Boko Haram, is not reported, a House of Representatives member from Borno State, Hon. Abdulrahman Terab, disclosed yesterday.

Terab represents the insurgency-wracked Bama/Ngala/Kala Balge federal constituencies of Borno State, part of areas in the country's north where violence linked to the Boko Haram insurgency has resulted in an estimated 10,000 deaths between 2002 and 2013, according to credible monitors.

Addressing newsmen at the National Assembly on the state of affairs in the north-east, Terab lamented that, despite the state of emergency already in its third lap, the insurgency was worsening.

The Borno lawmaker urged the federal government to be guided by international precedents in considering Boko Haram's request for prisoner swap deal for the release of over 200 schoolgirls abducted by the sect.

Colonel injures during Damboa attack

LEADERSHIP further gathered from a military source that a Commanding Officer of the 243 Battalion, Col Shu'aibu, was shot and wounded by Boko Haram members during the bloody encounter in Damboa local government area on Saturday.

Police defuse bomb in Gombe School

The police yesterday defused an explosive device planted in front of a pilot Secondary School in Tasha Dukku area of Gombe metropolis.

LEADERSHIP gathered that the incident occurred at about 10:30am.

Boko Haram Opens Fire On Soldiers Heading To Damboa

Barely 48 hours after they carried out what the military described as a daring attack on a military facility in Damboa town of Borno State, Boko Haram gunmen yesterday nearly repeated the Saturday episode which led to the death of 12 soldiers and four policemen.

Though the Boko Haram terrorists had also suffered huge loss of men as claimed by the military officials, the insurgents still attempted another daring attack when they laid ambush on the convoy of military vehicles heading for Damboa.

The soldiers were not alone on the dangerous Maiduguri-Biu road which leads to Damboa. Another convoy of the police was also conveying the corpse of one of the policemen that was killed during the shootout in Damboa on Saturday.

According to one of the relatives of the deceased police officer being conveyed in the police patrol van to his country home in Marama, Hawul local government area, "We thought with the soldiers moving in such large convoy going to Biu on that road that it was safer, but it turned out to be the most dangerous risk we've ever taken.

"We were barely 30km away from Maiduguri, even as our vehicles were moving at the snail speed of 50km per hour, that suddenly we started hearing heavy shooting coming from tree tops and from inside the surrounding bushes. It was the Boko Haram gunmen that were shooting from everywhere.

"Our luck was that they started firing from afar, and that gave us enough time to wriggle ourselves out of danger by reversing and fleeing back at neck-breaking speed to Maiduguri. Every one of us including the soldiers could not stand the shooting as one of the policemen was shouting 'move fast, move fast, they are using RPGs'."

The source, who did not want to be named as he feared offending the military personnel, said he could not believe that the Boko Haram gunmen, after the bloody encounter, could inch as close as 30km from Maiduguri to lay ambush on soldiers.

In Maiduguri, LEADERSHIP observed that many dwellers of Damboa Road had begun to flee in panic when they saw the convoy of soldiers