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Boko Haram Dares FG, Erects Tollgates

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— Jul 21, 2014 | 8 Comments

With most parts of northern and central Borno State under their control, gunmen of the Boko Haram have been mounting tollgates on major international highways within the state where they collect fees from passengers and drivers who are lucky to be spared, eyewitnesses and government officials said.

Apart from collecting tolls from travellers, the gunmen would also screen every passenger, and any person who speaks Kanuri or found to be a resident of Maiduguri would be shot dead, witnesses added.

In the last three weeks the gunmen had laid siege on the roads to Maff, Dikwa, Ngala and Gamboru, where they would ambush travellers and dispossess them of their goods. Most of their targets were vehicles conveying rice and sugar

supplied by government to be delivered to villagers for their use during the ongoing Ramadan fasting.

The route from Maiduguri to Gamboru, a border town near Cameroon, is about 185km and it is usually busied by heavy trailer trucks ferrying various commercial commodities to and from Nigeria.

But that commercial engagement that has provided jobs to hundreds of young men and older ones has now been slowed down due to the incessant attack by the Boko Haram gunmen.

Modu Air, a truck driver, told newsmen in Maiduguri, "Only a few of us are now plying the road. Many of our colleagues have changed routes because of the attacks that occur on the roads every day. I have witnessed instances where some passengers were shot dead either because they speak Kanuri and live in Maiduguri or because you come from one village where their members were killed or arrested by the vigilante."

Confirming the attacks on the highways, Hon. Idrissa Jidda, a member of the Borno State House of Assembly representing Gamboru-Ngala, said "the insurgents have absolute control of the road since the past one month. No day passes without a case of attack along the Maiduguri-Dikwa-Gamboru road and, in most cases, innocent people are being killed".

Jidda, who is also the majority leader of the Borno State House of Assembly, told newsmen that "the insurgents stop vehicles at various points and forcefully collect money from passengers".

"In most cases, they would carefully select some passengers and promptly execute them; they also kidnap girls at will and sometimes forcefully snatch vehicles that are loaded with assorted food items. The attacks are now rampant in Gamboru and Ngala to the extent that most of our people have fled to safer places like Maiduguri while many others have crossed over to Cameroon. We really need the intervention of the federal government," he said.

...Attacks power station, plunges Maiduguri into darkness

For three weeks running, Maiduguri, the Borno State capital, and its neighbourhoods have been plunged into total darkness following the reported damaging of major electricity installments around Damboa town by Boko Haram terrorists, security sources said.

For about 21 days now, the entire city of Maiduguri has not enjoyed electricity coming from the national grid.

Many residents of Maiduguri who were unaware of the development thought the power outage may have been caused by some ongoing upgrade of the 33KVA lines which the minister of state for power, Hon. Muhammed Wakil, said would be carried out to boost supply to the state.

But recent findings revealed that the suspected situation was not so but was as a result of an attack on major installations of the Power

Under Secretary of State

holding Company of Nigeria.

A military person who spoke to LEADERSHIP in Maiduguri confirmed that the Boko Haram insurgents had detonated bombs that affected the high-tension installations around Damboa and has since left the about two million residents of Maiduguri in total blackout.

Many residents now have to depend on power plants while major business outfits and even government offices depend solely on generators throughout the days.

The power outage has since caused residents some serious economic hardship as most businesses that depend on electricity now hike the prices of their products.

Many households that used to depend on the few hours of electricity supply from the national grid to produce their iced blocks needed for the Ramadan fasting period now have to buy from hawkers at expensive prices.

"We now buy iced sachet water for N25 but before it used to be sold for N10 each or, in some cases, two sachets of iced block for N15," said Bashir Mustapha, a resident of Maiduguri.

An official of the Yola Electricity Distribution Company, who spoke off the record because he was not allowed to speak on such matter, confirmed the development to LEADERSHIP even as he said it may take some time before power would be restored due to the recent takeover of Damboa area by the Boko Haram insurgents.

Boko Haram has, in the past three years, vandalized public infrastructure like telecommunication masts that had hitherto cut off various parts of Borno State from the rest of the word. The group had also used bombs and fire to destroy schools, hospitals, police offices, barracks and even cratering of roads. Their most recent attack on public infrastructure was the bombing of an ultra-modern drilling rig procured by Borno State at the cost of over N300 million at the site where it was mobilized to drill water for rural dwellers of the northern part of Borno State.

Damboa: Over 3,000 fleeing villagers camp in Biu

About 3,000 villagers displaced from Damboa town of Borno State where Boko Haram terrorists had on Friday hoisted its flags are now being camped in Biu town, officials have said.

A local government official from Damboa, Sheriff Muhammed, who is one of the internally displaced persons (IDPs) being camped in Damboa, said they had to flee far from Damboa because the insurgents still chased them to some of the nearby villages where they had run to take refuge to kill them.

Speaking on phone from Biu, some 100km away from Damboa, Muhammed said: "We are presently being camped at the premises of Government Girls' Secondary School, Biu.

"As at today (Sunday) many of our people who ran to Fori and Koiri villages, near Damboa, have been traced there and slaughtered by the Boko Haram gunmen."

Borno State deputy governor Zannah Mustapha, who had been visiting most of the attacked villages in the southern part of the state, had yesterday relocated to Biu where he was organising the reception of the IDPs.

Herdsmen attack Benue village, force residents to flee, kill 1, injure 3

Fulani herdsmen have attacked Owukpa community in Benue State, killing one person and injuring three in an early evening attack. Some residents of the community have taken refuge at the neighbouring Enugu State.

An online medium, DailyPost, has reported that the three people who were injured were presently in critical condition. A report says a man's hands were completely chopped off by the herdsmen.

The problem was said to have started when the Owukpa people got tired of the herdsmen's continuous stay on the land and told them to kindly relocate.

Apparently angered by their refusal to go, some youths mobilized themselves and confronted them to leave the community immediately. In the process of the argument, one of youths snatched one of their motorbikes and fled.

In a quick reprisal, the herdsmen invaded Atamaka and its neighbouring villages and destroyed some houses as well as farm produce.

Confirming the incident, a councillor representing Ehaje Ward II in Ogbadibo LGA of the state, Fred Apochi, said everything was calm until Sunday evening when the herdsmen returned to Ankpa to attack the villagers.

"I'm the councillor representing Ehaje Ward II and, as the chief security officer, I can confirm to you that everything is under control. The Benue State police commissioner would be in Ugbugbu with his men tomorrow (today)," he said.

Eyewitnesses however said that the entire Owukpa community is in disarray as people have deserted their homes to either Enugu State or Okpokuwu LGA. They decried the total absence of policemen, thereby leaving them in the hands of gun-wielding Fulani herdsmen.

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