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Boko Haram Takes Over Bama, Hoists Flag

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Boko Haram members yesterday reportedly took over Bama town and hoisted the sect's flag, following a fierce gun battle between them and Nigerian soldiers.

According to information obtained by LEADERSHIP, no fewer than 550 soldiers fled to Maiduguri from Bama alongside civilians because they could not withstand the military might of the insurgents.

However, some military sources have said the affected soldiers did not flee Bama alongside civilians because they were overwhelmed by the insurgents, but were asked to retreat into Maiduguri to avoid casualty during the planned air raids on Bama.

Scores were reported killed yesterday in Bama town as Boko Haram and soldiers engaged in a fierce shootout. The terrorists had, during an early morning attack, attempted to invade the town which they had attacked several times in the past, security officials and witnesses said.

In the wee hours of Monday, insurgents riding on several trucks led by armoured tanks stormed the town located about 50km north of Gwoza town.

The soldiers at the entrance of Bama coming from Gwoza, near the Mopol Barracks in Bama, were said to have engaged the terrorists who came in numbers equal to a full battalion.

Military sources who spoke to journalists in Maiduguri said the soldiers were able to kill about 70 of the terrorists and injure about 30 others.

An official of the State Security Service who spoke off the record confirmed the incident, even as he said more troops were being sent to Bama to beef up security presence.

A local security official, Muhammed Gava, told LEADERSHIP on phone that the insurgents came from the direction of Banki town and heading for Bama when they encountered soldiers and began exchange of fire before they later invaded the town.

"We heard that there are many casualties on both sides, but we cannot say the number or who had suffered more damage between the troops and the terrorists," said Mr Gava. "There are rumours that the soldiers were able to repel the attack in the first place, and many Boko Haram terrorists were killed and about 31 of them arrested alive. But the insurgents later mobilized and returned to Bama, and they are currently engaging the soldiers in Bama. Most of the residents had been on the run from through Konduga to Maiduguri."

Gava added that the terrorists were actually planning to attack Maiduguri town after finishing with Bama town, which is about 100km away.

The situation in Bama had forced most residents to flee into Maiduguri, even as some said they were advised by soldiers to leave the town because the engagement with the insurgents might involve air strike as well.

A fleeing resident of Bama, Mohammed Bunu Ahmed, told journalists at Bama motor park that "there was an attempt by the Boko Haram people to enter and capture Bama as they did in Gwoza some weeks back, but thank God for the efforts of the soldiers stationed near the mobile police unit who were able to repel them".

"The situation had actually scared many of our people and even forced some of them to run to Maiduguri town for safety," he said.

Another fleeing resident of Bama who spoke to journalists but begged not to be mentioned by name said, "Our security forces are good

fighters. I wish they were given the authority to fight these bad elements so they are today to fight the way we expect that they have

fighters. I think they were given the privilege to fight these bad elements or they are trying to fight the wrong reports that they have been running away from the Boko Haram. I saw a Mopol who was wounded and was being taken to hospital in Maiduguri, but I did not see any casualty on the side of the security operatives before help came to us and we left the town."

LEADERSHIP can report that there had been heightened fear in Maiduguri metropolis over the weekend as residents were terrified by the rumour that Boko Haram might attack the state capital anytime soon.

The authorities at the 7 Division headquarters of the Nigerian Army on Monday extended the curfew hour from nine nocturnal hours to 12 hours, even as it now includes everybody for total compliance.

The curfew hours' extension was announced in a statement signed by the deputy director, army public relations, Colonel Sani Usman, and made available to journalists in Maiduguri Monday.

The statement said "with effect from today (Monday), curfew hours imposed on Maiduguri metropolis and environs have been reviewed forward. It is now to last from 7pm to 6am daily. All must comply with this directive. Anyone found flouting this directive will be arrested and prosecuted".

In a related development, the village of Kotera in Hawul local government area of Borno State, on Sunday night, suffered an attack by Boko Haram terrorists who succeeded in killing five people and burning down scores of houses.

The attack, according to informed sources, had forced many villagers to flee their homes into the bushes.

We are repelling terrorists in Bama - DHQ

The Defence Headquarters last night claimed the terrorists are being repelled from Bama and that the casualty situation cannot be given for now. This was made known through Tweet @DefenceInfoNG: #Bama attack is being repelled. We cannot state casualty situation/figures now. Everything necessary will be done to contain the Terrorists.

Sustained Boko Haram attacks in Borno State have reportedly forced thousands of people from their homes, swamping towns in the north of Cameroon on Sunday.

"We've been flooded here in Mora by Cameroonians and Nigerians fleeing Boko Haram," a police officer in the northern town told AFP on condition of anonymity.

"The day before yesterday (Saturday), there were already more than 10,000 people in Mora. Not a day goes by without more people coming."

The number of internally displaced people in Nigeria and those who have crossed its borders into Cameroon, Niger and Chad because of the militant violence has been increasing, with no end in sight to the insurgency.

The United Nations' humanitarian office (OCHA) said on August 5 that Boko Haram attacks have forced nearly 650,000 people from their homes in the northeast states of Borno, Yobe and Adamawa.

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