

# Death toll hits 30 as army battles militia

## ■ Taps dry as Kano waterworks is seized

From Suleiman Dangana, Kano

**T**HE road to Panshekarau – the densely populated slum in Kumbotso Local Government Area of Kano State where some fundamentalists have killed 12 policemen – was opened yesterday after a 24-hour military siege.

But guns were still booming. The casualty figures have risen to no fewer than 30, it was learnt.

The Brigade Commander in Kano, Brig.-Gen. Kenneth Dido, confirmed that 25 of the invaders, who seized control of the Kano waterworks, turning off the taps, had died in action. He did not disclose the army's casualty.

There was heavy bombardment of the area by soldiers, in a bid to flush out the "gangsters" who, according to residents, called themselves members of the Al-Qaida network.

Our reporter who visited the buffer zone in Panshekara saw armoured vehicles moving towards the direction where the Al-Qaida members camped.

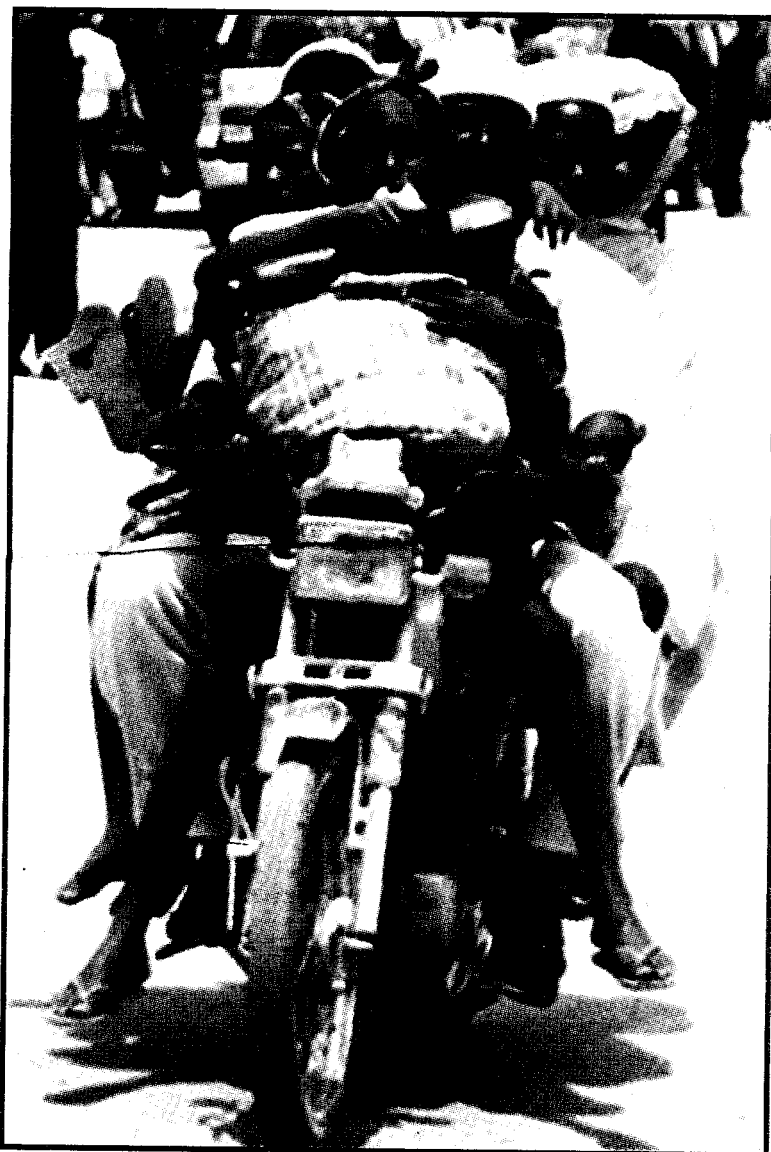
There was heavy shooting.

The Al-Qaida members have removed the Nigerian flag at Panshekara Police Station where they on Tuesday killed the police chief, his wife and 11 officers, and the Police Children School. In its place is their black flag with a white inscription.

A resident of Pashekara, Bashir Aminu, who spoke with reporters, said that members of the gang were up to 500.

They speak English, Hausa and Arabic. They are believed to have come from the

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• Locals on a motorbike fleeing the fighting ... yesterday.

## INEC dribbles AC on Atiku

From Yomi Odunuga, Abuja

**T**HE Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) was noncommittal yesterday on whether it has included Vice President Atiku Abubakar's name on the ballot for Saturday's election.

Vice President Atiku is the presidential candidate of the Action Congress (AC) in the poll.

The Supreme Court on Monday asked INEC to include Atiku's name on the ballot, saying the agency has no powers to ban candidates from

contesting elections.

A delegation from the party could not sight the ballot on which its candidate's name is printed yesterday.

The party had written INEC Chairman Maurice Iwu on Monday of its planned visits to ensure compliance with the Supreme court judgment.

In the letter, the National Secretary of the AC, Alhaji Bashir Dalhatu said:

"As you know, on

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## N330b for Fed Govt, states, local govts

FOR March, N330.979 billion was shared among the three tiers of government.

This, according to Accountant General of the Federation, Alhaji Ibrahim Dankwamba, includes the gap in financing between the budget and the actual; that is, shortage in crude oil production of N61.915 billion that

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PHOTO: AP

# Insurgency in Kano raises some security questions

**T**HE second day of the military operation against elements suspected to be Islamic insurgents in Panshekara, Kano State, has set tongues wagging on how the insurgents escaped security eyes to strike so successfully.

Standing at 500 in number, including men, women and children, they camped in a primary school for weeks without detection. Panshekara residents related being told by the insurgents that they have no problems with the populace but with security elements.

It is either that the insurgents have strategic thinkers or the Nigerian security is asleep. Each of these positions weigh heavily. The selection of Panshekara and the timing of the insurgency suggest that the warriors are either trained or have people who do strategic analysis for them.

Panshekara is a densely populated slum where guerillas can easily melt into the populace because it is impossible to evacuate or separate the residents. The geography

By Adagbo Onoja,  
Managing Editor

is also such that insurgents can move rapidly from one section to another without detection, including jumping over thatched buildings unlike in planned settlements. It is this difficulty to block mass advances in slums like Panshekara that enabled the insurgents to have, by Wednesday afternoon, commenced the classic guerilla tradition of hit and run, evading military assault by moving from Panshekara to Kura on the Kano-Kaduna Federal Highway. That allows them to hit viciously at another Police Station before long and overstretch or de-concentrate the military.

As at yesterday afternoon, re-enforcement was underway from Kaduna.

The second evidence of strategic thinking in the operation of the insurgents is the element of timing and place. They have obviously timed their operation to coincide with when all of national attention is on the elections, rather than

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Republic of Sudan, Chad Republic and Maiduguri in Borno State.

According to the local resident, the Al-Qaida members, whose bodies they believe are bullet-proof, include men, women and children carrying AK47 automatic rifles.

He said that some of them wear T-shirts and red garments with turban to match.

Among them are children aged between 13 and 17 years.

Residents are relocating from the town, following the gang's advice.

It was also gathered that the gang is not after the civilian population but are out to fight institutions.

The motive of the Al-Qaida members is

routine security. So also have they chosen Kano to strike, obviously latching on to the assassination of Sheikh Ja'afar Adam, the popular Islamic cleric killed on April 12 in Kano. Hence the insurgents are saying that Muslim leaders were being killed without any arrests being made or any strong denouncement by the political leadership. The gap in that strategy is simply that Kano is violence-weary now

and that campaign did not catch on. Their third smartness is the propaganda that they are impregnable to gunshots.

Still, the question is how come they were not detected, especially in the context of the sequence of events in Kano in the last two weeks?

On April 9, the insurgents killed four men of the Federal Road Safety Corp. Two days later, they took on Sharada

not yet known but residents say they claim not to be happy over the killing of a leading Kano Islamic scholar and the Chief Imam of Doroyi Juma'a Mosque, Sheikh Jafar Mahmud Adam. He was killed last week while leading prayers in the mosque.

But the Deputy Imam of Doroyi Juma'a Mosque, Alhaji Abba Adam Koki debunked such claims, saying that the late Sheikh Jafar Adam had no link whatsoever with the group.

The Al-Qaida members are not happy that in spite of the killing of the late Sheikh Adam, the governorship and House of Assembly elections were still held, it was learnt.

Police Station in an early morning surprise attack, killing three policemen and confiscating all their weapons. The Kano Police Command confirmed in a statement after this attack that the insurgents numbering 40 looted everything in the station. On April 13, the cleric, Sheikh Ja'afar Adam, was assassinated in an early morning operation. Interestingly, Dorayi, where the Sheikh was killed,

Sharada where the April 11 raid took place and Panshekara where insurgency later erupted on April 17, are in one contiguous section of Kano. Beyond these, the April 14 election in Kano had all the ingredients of volatility, indicators that should have hinted a security alertness beyond the flashy conclusions.

An immediate consequence is the Panshekara slaughter of 13 policemen and a woman last Tuesday followed by the military offensive. A day after the offensive, main Kano was completely without water as Panshekara is the water treatment base in Kano. Workers could not go to work, following which water ceased to flow into the city.

The last time Kano experienced this type of violence was the Maitatsine uprising in 1982. That was a week-long revolt that was eventually crushed by an artillery operation by the military. But there is not much to compare between the Maitatsine followers and the present insurgents. The only thing that unites them is that they are on the fringes of Islam.

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