

Boko Haram kills 10 in bloody weekend

'Anti-terrorism law good for security agencies'

IN yet another bloody weekend, suspected Boko Haram members have killed 10 persons in Maiduguri, the Borno State capital.

The victims include a local government chairman. Many were injured in three attacks at different places in the city.

Government at the weekend took a major step to stem the activities of the Islamic Fundamentalist Group with President Goodluck Jonathan raising a panel to review the security situation in the country.

The panel may also probe the whereabouts of the N1.8billion released to a former Inspector-General of Police for the installation of CCTV cameras in the Federal Capital Territory (FCT) and some other cities.

The fear of Boko Haram gripped Abuja last night.

There was an unusual presence of heavy security around the headquarters of the Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation (NNPC) following the fear of attack by the group.

Attempts to clarify the cause of the security beef up from corporation spokesman Livi Ajuonuma last night were unsuccessful.

The President has, according to sources, ruled out the removal of Inspector-General of Police Hafiz Ringim, the service chiefs and heads of security agencies over the spate of bombings in the North.

The panel is made up of some former National Security Advisers and some past and present officers from the intelligence service.

CHIEF of Army Staff Lt.-Gen. Azubuike Ihejirika, is confident that the anti-terrorism law will enhance the efficiency of security agencies.

Gen. Ihejirika spoke yesterday during an interaction with reporters shortly after the Inter-Denominational Church Service held to mark the 2011 Nigerian Army Day Celebration at the All Saints Military Church (Protestant), Mogadishu Cantonment, Abuja.

The News Agency of Nigeria (NAN) reports that the Senate on Feb. 17 passed the anti-terrorism law, 24 hours after President Goodluck Jonathan urged the National Assembly to speed up the process of enacting the law.

The law creates the legal framework for fighting all forms of terrorism.

From Yusuf Alli, John Ofikhenua, Abuja and Abiodun Joseph, Maiduguri

Although the list of members was kept secret, it was gathered that the panel will operate "covertly".

It was also learnt that the panel may exchange information and compare notes with intelligence units of some countries since terrorism is a global issue.

Chairman of Ijere Local government Area, Alhaji Mustapha Baale was yesterday shot dead by gunmen believed to be members of the Boko Haram.

He was killed around 3.30pm on his way home on Old Maiduguri Road within his local government area.

Baale, a three-time chairman of the local government, was reappointed to the post barely

Gen. Ihejirika said: "The passage of the anti-terrorism bill is a major achievement, which will encourage the security agencies to be more committed to their jobs.

"Previously, there had been cases of people being arrested and released under one excuse or another, because the extant law has not provided adequately on issues such as kidnapping."

Commenting on the church service, he said the thrust of the sermon was the nobility of the profession, stressing that "no gift is superior to laying down one's life, if necessary for one's country or friends".

"The ethics of the military profession demands that a soldier must be satisfied with his wage; and the message has been brought home to all.

"As soldiers, who have signed up to

defend the nation, I can proudly say we have all it takes to do our jobs; with good salaries, goodwill of the people and prayers from Christians and Muslims, the soldiers have no excuse."

Lt.-Col. Charles Iroegbu, the Director, Army Catholic Chaplaincy, urged officers and men of the Army to be contented with their wage.

Taking the text of his sermon from John 15 vs 13, Iroegbu said soldiers should maintain the nobility of their profession.

Soldiers, he added, would be wonderful, if they shunned intimidation and extortion, stressing:

"Our responsibility is to protect Nigerians, not to intimidate them, not to extort anything from them, but to work with them."

brothers – Isa Umar and Apagu Umar.

In the Sunday attacks at the Mammy market, a father of 10 was among those shot dead. There was also a retired soldier among the wounded.

Head of the Joint Police Military Task Force in Maiduguri, Maj. Gen. Jack Nwachukwu Nwaogbo confirmed the killings.

A source, who spoke in confidence on the presidential action on Boko Haram said: "Contrary to the insinuations that Mr. President's approach to the security challenges facing the country has been weak, he has been doing a lot.

"A panel has been set up to review the security situation, what has gone wrong, stock-taking of the level of sophistication to cope with the latest challenges facing Nigeria,



•Ringim

tigation into the bomb explosion at the Force Headquarters where it was difficult to get the footage of the bomber might have informed a review of the N1.8billion project by the police.

"After the panel has submitted its report, the President will determine whether the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission should step in or not."

On the alleged plans to remove Ringim, and service chiefs over the Boko Haram menace, the source added: "The President has ruled out such a step because terrorism is a global challenge and it requires a global reaction.

"Jonathan has said he does not want to play to the gallery through mere grandstanding to remove security chiefs. He believes that recourse to bombing by Boko Haram is a challenge to all Nigerians, including himself as the Commander-In-Chief of the Armed Forces.

"Instead, the President has given these security chiefs a major task to arrest the insurgency and they are on top of the situation."