

Boko Haram confirms members' death in Maiduguri blast

THE Boko Haram sect yesterday confirmed that three of its members were killed by their bombs in Saturday's explosion in Shuwari, Maiduguri.

Spokesman of the sect, Mallam Abul Qaqa, confirmed the incident in a telephone interview with reporters in Maiduguri, the Borno State capital.

He said: "We have hundreds of members who are willing to sacrifice their lives in this crusade. The unfortunate incident on Saturday will not discourage us. If anything, it will encourage us to strategise and diversify our techniques, because we are not afraid of death."

The Joint Task Force (JTF), code-named *Operation Restore Order*, said at the weekend that three suspected members of the group died in an early morning explosion at Shuwari, in Maiduguri.

JTF spokesman Lt.-Col. Hassan Ifijeh, told reporters that large quantities of unused Improvised Explosive Devices (IEDs), AK 47 rifles, ammunitions and other vital items were recovered from the scene of the blast.

He said three unidentified mutilated bodies of suspected Boko Haram mem-

bers, suspected to be running the illegal bomb-making factory, were also found.

Abul Qaqa said: "Hundreds of our members were killed in 2009, but we remain resolute."

He claimed that his men had repelled alleged attempts by security agencies to arrest some members of the sect after cordoning off a house at Karkasara area of Kano.

He also claimed that the group set its men free by killing the security operatives.

Mallam Abubakar Shekau, the "spiritual head" of the sect, threatened yesterday to unleash mayhem on Kano unless urgent steps are taken by the authorities to stop the arrest of its members.

Shekau, in an e-mail statement in Maiduguri, said the group would "launch endless attacks on Kano following arbitrary arrest and persecution of our members".

He claimed that the sect had sent open letters to some prominent people, including the Emir of Kano, Alhaji Ado Bayero; Kano State Governor Rabiu Kwankwaso; Alhaji Aminu Alhassan Dantata and Sheikh Isiaka Rabiu.