

NEWS

# Three North Korean doctors killed in Yobe

THREE North Korean doctors were killed yesterday in Potiskum, the commercial city of Yobe State. One of them was beheaded. The others had their throats slit.

The night attack came after Friday's killing of nine women health workers who were administering polio vaccination on children in Kano.

No group has claimed responsibility for the killing of the foreign doctors, but Yobe State, along with neighbouring Borno State, is the epicentre of the activities of Boko Haram.

The fundamentalist sect recently declared a ceasefire, saying that some criminal groups had been using its name to perpetrate violence.

The attackers apparently struck at the North Korean doctors inside their home, said Dr. Mohammed Mamman, chairman of the Hospital Management Board of Yobe State. The North Korean doctors had no security guards at their residence and typically travelled around the city via three-wheel taxis without a police escort, officials said.

By the time soldiers arrived at the house, they found the doctors' wives cowering in a flower bed outside their home. At the property, they found the bodies of the men, all bearing what appeared to be machete wounds.

An Associated Press (AP)

From Duku Joel, Damaturu

journalist later saw the North Korean doctors' bodies before they were moved to nearby Bauchi state for safe keeping. Two of the men had their throats slit. Attackers beheaded the other doctor.

The doctors lived in a quiet neighborhood filled with other modest homes in the town.

Initially, doctors at the hospital who worked with the physicians identified them as being from South Korea. The police identified the dead as being from China. But Mamman told reporters those killed were from North Korea who had lived in the state since 2005 as part of a medical programme between the state and the North Korean government.

Yobe State Police Commissioner Sanusi Rufai confirmed that the attack took place. He said officers had begun an investigation. Rufai said some arrests had been made.

The Yobe State Government in a statement by the Abdullahi Bego the Special Adviser on Media and Press Affairs to Governor Gaidam condemned the killings.

The statement said: "Yobe State Government received with shock news of the murder of three doctors from the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) in Potiskum today. The doctors, working for the State Government,

were killed in the early hours of Sunday at their residence by unknown gunmen.

"The Yobe State Government strongly condemns the murder of these doctors, who have contributed immensely to improving healthcare service delivery in the state. Arrangements are being made with the Korean coordinator to transfer the remains of the deceased to their home country as soon as possible.

"The State Government, on behalf of the entire people of Yobe State, also expresses its heartfelt condolences to the families of the deceased, the Korean Ambassador to Nigeria and the people and government of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) over this sad and unfortunate incident.

"The Yobe State Government will offer every possible support to the security agencies to track and prosecute the perpetrators of this criminal and condemnable act. The state government will also continue to partner the security agencies to ensure the safety of people's life and property."

Boko Haram (Western education is sacrilege) has been attacking government buildings and security forces over the last year and a half. In 2012 alone, the group was blamed for killing at least 792 people, according to a count by AP.

"Unknown attackers scaled

over the fence of an apartment in Potiskum housing the three doctors around 1:00 am and slit their throats," Yobe State Police Commissioner Sanusi Rufai told AFP.

"Unfortunately, when they were posted and assumed duties as expatriates, the police were not notified to give them adequate security coverage.

"As I am talking to you now, I am in Potiskum. The three male health workers have been confirmed dead while we are still working to uncover the details," he said.

"It is still premature to point any accusing fingers but we have commenced investigation to unravel the killings," he said.

A local resident said the bodies of the Koreans were found in their room Sunday morning by neighbours who alerted the security agents who in turn forced the door open.

They were found slain after "people became worried when the doctors did not open their door in the morning," a resident who did not want to be named told AFP.

He said the victims had their throats slit, but it was not immediately clear if the assailants also came with guns.

A resident Adamu(not real name) said six walked straight to the compound tied up the doctors and slit their throats one after the other with other two taking position at the gate while the gruesome act was

going on.

He said: "I was peeping through the window when six armed men walked to the house of the doctors in this area. Two of them took positions at the gate, while four entered the house. Ten minutes later, I started hearing the cries; and yelling probably from the gunmen giving orders to their colleagues. But I cannot tell you whether all the three doctors were killed or not, because I did not hear the sounds of any gunshot fired by the suspects that night."

Another resident said he woke up and saw the head of one of the doctors placed in front of the gate.

The Emir of Fika, and Chairman of Yobe State Traditional Council of Chief, Alhaji Muhammadu Ibn Mohammed Idrissa Abali, also condemned the killing. He urged the JTF and the police to deploy more troops in Potiskum, as the

town have continued to be targets of the insurgent.

The chairman of the Nigeria Medical Association (NMA) in the state condemned the killings. In a statement, Dr Adamu Umar, said: "The NMA in Yobe State is saddened by the news of the gruesome murder of the three Korean health workers in Potiskum."

Yesterday's attack also followed a spate of killings of Chinese nationals in the northeast in recent months.

In November last year, gunmen shot dead two Chinese construction workers in Borno State.

On October 19, a Chinese construction worker was killed in Maiduguri. Another Chinese national was shot dead on October 7 in Gubio, outside Maiduguri.

The killings of the Chinese nationals at the time prompted Beijing to lodge a diplomatic protest to the Federal Government.

## NMA seeks passage of bill

By Wale Adepoju

THE Nigerian Medical Association (NMA) yesterday urged the National Assembly to pass the 2012 National Health Bill (NHB).

Its president Dr Osagbon Enabulele, made the call at a briefing in Lagos.

Enabulele said the bill, which is being considered by the National Assembly would reform the country's health sector.

According to him, the health system has failed to meet the expectations of the people.

times predominating and characterised by poor health outcomes.

"High maternal mortality, infant mortality and low life expectancy, worse than Ghana," he said.

He said the financing of health care was largely done from the pockets of the people, which was not proper.

He said the passage of the bill would address the medical tourism crisis which contributed to the loss of over \$500 million yearly.