

55 die as Boko Haram hits troops, prisons, barracks

Our Reporter

It was bloody yesterday in Bama, a town 75 kilometres from Maiduguri, the beleaguered capital of Borno State.

-Dead: 22 policemen, 14 prison officials, 13 insurgents, 3 kids, 2 soldiers

In a movie-like scene, about 10 trucks carrying an unspecified number of gunmen rolled into the town at dawn. The gunmen, believed to be Boko Haram fighters, attacked a police barracks and a military formation. No fewer than 55 persons, including 22 policemen, 13 prison officials as well as several insurgents, died in the mayhem. Among the dead were two women believed to be wives of two policemen and their three children.

The invaders attacked a prison, setting some 109 inmates free.

From one government facility to the other, the gunmen moved, leaving a trail of blood and tears.

At the Prison Service, 13 officials were killed. Five policemen were killed at the Mobile Police Barracks/Base. Three people, including a woman who had just got married to a police corporal, were killed.

The Magistrate's Court, Revenue Office, Primary Healthcare Centre and Local Government secretariat, among other public places, were burnt.

Also set ablaze were the Divisional Police Headquarters and the offices of the DPO and that of the Area Commander.

Bama streets were empty all yesterday. Only soldiers and riot policemen were seen.

The casualty at the prison may not have been big, according to sources, but for the inmates who reportedly exposed the officials hiding behind firewood heaps.

But the gunmen met a stiff resistance at the 202 Military Barracks on the outskirts of the town. Many of them were gunned down as they attempted to jump over the fence. A suspect, Bakura Ibrahim, was arrested.

Some reporters, who were guided by the JTF spokesman, Lt.-Col. Sagir Musa, visited the 202 Barracks yesterday to see the scene of the fighting. They were conducted round by the Commanding Officer, Lt.-Col. A.G. Laka. He said 10 suspected Boko Haram members, some in military uniforms, were killed by soldiers who foiled their attempt to attack the barracks.

Some arms and ammunition were recovered from the suspects. They included several 4 litres plastic containers of water mixed with hard drugs, which, according to the military officer, makes insurgents lose their senses after taking it.

Lt.-Col. Laka said his men succeeded in killing many of the suspects, but some of them picked up the bodies of their colleagues before running away into the bush. They later attacked Banki, a town on the Camerounian border.

Ten insurgents and seven policemen were killed penultimate week during a clash between security operatives and militants in Bama.

About 200 houses, including shops were razed during that confrontation.

Boko Haram launched its uprising in the tiny town in 2009, headquarters of Bama Local Government Area.

Located about 75 kilometres away from Maiduguri, Bama, with an area of 4,997 square kilometers, has a population of 269, 986 according to the Nigerian Population Census (NPC) record of 2006.