

50 Boko Haram members, two soldiers killed

•Banki Bridge seized from terrorists

The Islamic sect, Boko Haram has lost the strategic Banki town and its bridge in Borno State to Nigerian troops at what sources described as a great cost to its members.

No fewer than 50 insurgents were killed in a 72 hour battle with soldiers deployed to seize the border town between Nigeria and Cameroun.

Two soldiers were killed and four others wounded in the operation.

Sources said Boko Haram had been using the link bridge to invade Borno State from Cameroun at will.

A military source described the bridge as vital to “our counter-attacks against the insurgents.”

“I think their plan was to blow up the bridge but we were able to abort this. We are also in total control of Banki town. Many troops have been deployed in the area while air raid of the cells and bases of the cell continues,” the source said.

“The insurgents suffered many casualties; we were able to kill about 50 of them. The Boko Haram will not admit but the military is firmly in control.

“We have pursued the insurgents back to their new bases along the Camerounian borders.”

When contacted, the spokesman for the Defence Headquarters, Maj-Gen. Chris Olukolade said the troop lost two soldiers while four others were wounded.

He said: “The fighting took place in Banki to repel the insurgents. The troops have secured the territory but we have placed the entire border town under heavy air and ground surveillance.”

There was no independent confirmation of the claim.

In the last one month, the troops and the insurgents have been locked in a series of clashes in Bama, Lake Chad and Banki areas.

The Defence Headquarters put the casualty figures on the side of the sect at about 113 as at December 30.

The figures included about 50 Boko Haram insurgents and 15 soldiers that were killed in a pre-dawn attack of Mohammed Kuru Barracks in Bama.