

35 Boko Haram terrorists killed in military ambush



****Three soldiers die, three wounded in two Borno encounters***

About 35 insurgents of Boko Haram have been killed in a military ambush close to Damboa, Borno State.

The soldiers also recovered a Hilux vehicle, rocket propelled grenades and rifles from the terrorists as their fellow insurgents attacked Damagum in Yobe State.

Military sources could not give any figure but a resident said he counted 35 bodies of terrorists

The Nation gathered yesterday that the Boko Haram members had attempted to attack engineers who were working to restore power supply to some parts of Borno State.

But unknown to the insurgents there was a heavy military security arrangement in place to protect the engineers.

Sources said that the troops opted for pre-emptive strikes which provoked a fierce battle with the insurgents.

"A very large number of terrorists met their final waterloo after falling into an ambush laid for them by Nigerians troops between Maiduguri and Damboa on Friday," a top military source said.

"The clash followed the troops' move to stop the terrorists who were in the process of attacking the electricity engineers who were working to restore power to parts of Borno State.

"A large number of the terrorists died in the process while their improvised explosive device (IED) laden Hilux truck vehicle was destroyed.

"Other weapons recovered by troops include rocket propelled grenades and rifles. Unfortunately, however, two soldiers died in the encounter.

Responding to a question, the source added: "The ongoing mopping operation will determine the number of the terrorists who died in the encounter."

Haruna Ibrahim, a member of a vigilante militia, which fights alongside the military, said by phone yesterday that the Boko Haram attacks on Damboa began before Friday prayers and most of them died from the gun battle.

"We went to the scene this morning (yesterday) mopping up with soldiers and dead bodies were spread everywhere, I counted 35 of them," he said.

Another military source said there was also an encounter between military engineers and Boko Haram in Husara leading to the death of a soldier and the wounding of three others.

The military source said: "The military engineers, who had been clearing terrorists IEDs and effecting repairs on bridges, repelled an attack while working on a bridge around Husara.

"Several terrorists also died in the encounter. A total four General Purpose Machine Guns, three rifles and two Rocket Propelled Grenade Launchers were captured from the terrorists during the encounter.

"One soldier however died while three others were wounded in the encounter.

"During the encounter, the troops also captured a Hilux vehicle earlier stolen by the terrorists from the Borno State Ministry of Education, which they have repainted and mounted with an anti-aircraft gun.

"In Adamawa State, troops yesterday continued with the conduct of land patrol of towns of Mubi, Uba, Garkida, Muva and others towns and villages through coordinated air and land operations in furtherance of counterterrorism campaign.

When contacted, the Director of Defence Information, Major-General Chris Olukolade confirmed the incidents but insisted that the "exact casualty figures were still being ascertained."

A Damagum resident, Musa Muhammad Damagun, speaking yesterday on the assault on the town by the sect said: "We locked ourselves in the house after we heard several explosions went off and gun firing. We did not notice any killings but they broke shops and chemists, looted medicine and food items."

Troops had on Wednesday repelled a Boko Haram attack near Gumsuri where 185 people were kidnapped last week, killing several insurgents.

Roughly 150 militants stormed the town of Bulabulin on Wednesday, but the military had reportedly received advanced warning of the raid.

Bulabulin lies in the Damboa local government area of Borno state and is near the village of Gumsuri where 185 people, mostly women and children, were kidnapped last Sunday.

"Our men climbed high electricity poles for surveillance and sighted (the insurgents) from afar," said a senior officer who participated in the operation but requested anonymity.

Two security sources estimated that a large number of insurgents were killed by the military but there was no official toll.

Resident Samuel James confirmed that the military overpowered the militants.

“We would have been dead by now but the army really gave the terrorists a good fight,” he told AFP.

Olukolade said reports of the mass kidnapping in Gumsuri needed to be verified but confirmed that Boko Haram had attacked the town, killing a number of civilians.

Locals and officials said the hostages were carted away on trucks towards the Sambisa Forest, a notorious Islamist stronghold.