

## Boko Haram chief feared dead



A Boko Haram leader may have been killed during air strikes against the insurgents in the Northeast by Nigerian and Allied forces, it was learnt yesterday.

Members of the allied forces are Chad, Niger and Cameroon who are Nigeria's neighbours.

But the authenticity of the reported killing of the sect's chief is being investigated by military authorities.

The sect leader is said to be one of the senior officers in Boko Haram command during the tenure of the late Mohammed Yusuf, founder of the group.

Besides, the military has recovered deadly weapons from the insurgents in Baga. They include armoured tanks, artillery guns, and many Toyota Hilux vans.

The battle to liberate Gwoza, Gulak and others was ongoing yesterday.

According to military sources, the battle to sack Boko Haram from the Northeast has assumed a large-scale dimension.

The sources claimed that many camps and cells of the insurgents had been razed down through heavy air strikes.

One of the sources said a top Boko Haram leader was feared killed in one of the air strikes.

The highly-placed source said: "As the battle to annihilate Boko Haram terrorists in the Northeast parts of the country intensifies with Nigerian troops in conjunction with allied forces from neighbouring countries gaining the upper hand, there is suppressed excitement about the reported death of a top ranking leader of the terrorists

operating in the region.

“Commanders at the frontline reported that the leader was a casualty of the ongoing heavy air bombardment from warplanes while clearing the way for the ground troops of multinational task force to move into some towns near one of the borders.

Director of Defence Information Maj-Gen. Chris Olukolade declined to give details on the killing of the top Boko Haram leader.

He simply said: “As far as we are concerned, anybody that is associated with terrorism is a target and right now, we have a task of cleaning up the entire Boko Haram – infested region and returning peace to the country.”

One of the leaders of Boko Haram whose death has been controversial is Abubakar Shekau.

On 19 August 2013, the Joint Task Force (JTF) announced his death.

They claimed he died of gunshot wounds received in an encounter with the JTF in one of their camps in Sambisa Forest on June 30, 2013.

Many months later, Shekau re-emerged to dispute the claim of his death.

But the military disputed the re-emergence of Shekau by claiming that the man in the video was allegedly “having different mannerisms, gait and character from the original Shekau”.