

## Chadian army kills 13 insurgents

Chadian soldiers have killed 13 Boko Haram fighters in a battle at Gamboru in Borno State.

The country's army, in a statement yesterday, added that one soldier was killed during the encounter.

Chadian troops are in Gamboru as part of a regional offensive against Boko Haram, whose militants are staging cross-border raids in addition to attacks in Nigeria.

The sect launched a pre-dawn raid in Gamboru, to overwhelm Chadian troops, who had pushed them out of the border town.

The military in N'Djamena said the militants were repelled, but the counter-attack was an indication of the task facing regional forces in the fight against the sect.

Troops from Chad, Cameroon and Niger have been deployed to fight the insurgents, whose bloody insurgency have claimed more than 13,000 lives since 2009.

Boko Haram's counter-attack on Gamboru, which has been repeatedly targeted in the past, is an established tactic from the militants, who have seized dozens of towns and villages since mid-2014.

The extent of the rebels' control of the captured areas has been hard to verify, with claim and counter-claim that the authority has repeatedly switched between the insurgents and the military.

Boko Haram's apparent ability to regroup is a sign of its transformation from a rag-tag guerrilla group carrying out hit and run strikes to a more effective fighting force.

The insurgents were initially pushed out of Gamboru, which lies on the Nigerian side of the border with Cameroon in the eastern fringe of Borno state, on February 3.

Chadian ground troops crossed over the bridge marking the frontier after days of sustained bombardment. The following day, rebel fighters counter-attacked in the Cameroon town of Fotokol.

"The Boko Haram elements wanted to surprise us by attacking at about 4:00 am (0300 GMT)," a military source in N'Djamena told *Agence France Presse (AFP)* of the latest attack.

"We were aware of it from the day before and were prepared. They arrived with 14 vehicles and two armoured vehicles. We repulsed them and they retreated.

"A helicopter was brought in to join the pursuit and destroy them."

One Chadian soldier and several Boko Haram fighters were killed, while eight troops were injured, the source said.

Boko Haram has stepped up the frequency and intensity of its attacks since the turn of the year, in part to undermine the Nigerian elections.

A devastating attack on the fishing hub of Baga on January 3 has been seen as a turning-point in regional cooperation, galvanising neighbouring powers into providing assistance to Nigerian.

Since then, there have been repeated attacks in northern Cameroon, while the Islamists last weekend opened up a new front across the border in Niger, attacking the border region of Diffa.

Niamey on Tuesday imposed a 15-day state of emergency in Diffa, where thousands of Nigerians have fled the violence, heaping pressure on food supplies and infrastructure.

A reporter in the area said businesses, government offices and schools were shut as residents sought to flee.

Nigeria maintains the involvement of troops from Chad, Cameroon and now Niger, after the parliament in Niamey approved the deployment of soldiers, is part of an existing agreement.

At the same time, all four countries, whose borders converge on Lake Chad, with Benin, Nigeria's neighbour to the west, agreed to provide 8,700 personnel for an African Union-backed regional force.