

Shoot-out in Abuja

•7 killed, 12 arrested

•They were Boko Haram insurgents –SSS

•We are labourers – Survivors

CHRIS AGBAMBU- ABUJA

ARMED authorities on Friday confirmed that seven persons were shot dead in uncompleted buildings behind the National Assembly Quarters in Apo, Zone E, Abuja. The buildings are said to belong to a retired Major General.

The State Security Service (SSS) also confirmed that it was an operation against Boko Haram in which "some persons were wounded" and 12 arrested but gave no figure of the dead.

SSS spokeswoman, Marilyn Ogar, in a statement on Friday said the operation was carried out by a combined team of security agents.

Ogar's statement reads: "In the early hours of today 20th September, 2013, about 0030 hours, a com-

bined security team went for an operation behind the Apo Legislative Quarters. The operation was sequel to information obtained from two **Boko Haram** elements, Kamal Abdullahi and Mohammed Adamu, who had earlier been arrested for terrorist activities. They led the security team to uncompleted buildings where arms were purported to have been buried underground.

"No sooner had the team commenced digging for the arms than they came under heavy gunfire attack by other Boko Haram elements within the area, which prompted immediate response from the security team. As a result, some persons were injured and 12 others have been arrested in connection with the incident, and are making useful statements.

"Normalcy has returned

to the area. Members of the public are advised to go about their normal businesses, as appropriate security measures have been emplaced to ensure the safety of citizens in the FCT. We want to reiterate the need for all Nigerians to be vigilant of their immediate environment and promptly report suspicious activities to security agencies. Our national security must remain the collective responsibility of all Nigerians."

When contacted on the incident, the Director, Army Public Relations, Brig.-Gen. Ibrahim Attahiru, said it was a joint operation.

According to him, "it was the SSS's, intelligence gathering that led to the operation and we gave them support with sophisticated weapons. At the end of the operation, seven of the suspects were gunned down."

Some people who spoke to the **News Agency of Nigeria (NAN)** at the scene of the incident said that gunshots were heard at midnight and that the shooting lasted for an hour.

A resident of the area, Umar, told **NAN** that nine people had been taken to hospital apart from the seven dead.

Umar alleged that the people who did the shooting were in uniform.

"They came and shared themselves, some lay on the floor, some went inside, some standing," he said.

Another resident of the area, who identified himself as Femi, confirmed to **NAN** that the shooting started about 11.45p.m. on Thursday and lasted till midnight.

"This morning, we heard that a lot of people died while some were wounded and had been taken to the

hospital," he said.

The FCT Police Public Relations Officer, DSP Altine Daniel, confirmed that there was an incident at the uncompleted buildings but added: "I do not have the briefing, honestly."

However, Malam Huwal Umaru, the leader of labourers in the area, said six men in army uniform came into the uncompleted buildings where no fewer than 100 labourers were staying and started shooting.

"At the end of the operation, seven of my people were killed and many were injured. The uniformed men also went away with 15 of our people. We don't even know their fate now; maybe they are alive or dead. And when we (did a head) count, we could not account for three," Umaru told **NAN**.

He told **NAN** that the armed men came in two SUVs. According to him, the white one was parked at the entrance of the gate leading to the street while the black one was stationed at the junction adjacent to the street.

He said when they (armed men) got to the front of the buildings, they started shooting, rousing the people from sleep.

"It was the sound of the gun that woke the people up. They were confused and ran to the direction of the attackers. Those that were not sleeping were able to prevent more people from running outside," **NAN** quoted him as saying.

Umaru said that before the tragic event, a security man from Kaduna State had left the building with his girlfriend and his friend.

Umaru said for more than one year, they had been living peacefully in the uncompleted buildings.

"We are into various me-

nial jobs like shoe shining, masonry, selling tea, while some drive Keke NAPEP (tricycle). This is a place we have been living for over one year, not free of charge, and we don't constitute nuisance to anybody," he told **NAN**.

Umaru said that on Wednesday, the owner of the buildings came to pay the security man guarding the structure his salary and, in the process, noticed some movements within.

He said after series of investigation and questioning, he got to know that some people were living in the buildings and he gave them a week's notice to vacate the place.

"The man warned us that if we (had not vacated) the buildings by Wednesday, he would make life unbearable for us, as he would bring soldiers to chase us away," Umaru said.

He said they had an agreement with the security man to be paying N200 weekly per person.

"We don't have any problem with anybody; all we do is to go out in the morning to look for our daily bread and come back to lay our head," Umaru said.

One of the security men in one of the houses on the street said that the uniformed men were more than six but only six went for the operation. He said he and his colleagues were outside the buildings when the people came and were ordered to go inside their house and lock the windows.

He said that a few minutes after the instruction, they heard gunshots and shouts of agony by people.

NAN gathered that the victims were all male. Their corpses were taken away in an ambulance belonging to the Nigeria Security and Civil Defence Corps.

Jonathan sacks Emordi, Olagunju as Special Advisers

PRESIDENT Goodluck Jonathan has relieved former member of the Senate, Senator Joy Emordi, of her appointment as his Special Adviser on National Assembly Matters.

The termination of Emordi's appointment is with immediate effect.

So also did the President terminate the appointment of a former Minister of Special Duties, Dr. Tunji Olagunju, as his Special Adviser on the New Partnership for Africa's Development.

The spokesman of the

President, Dr. Reuben Abati, in a statement on Friday, said Jonathan thanked Emordi and Olagunju for their services and wished them success in their future endeavours.

Just last week, Jonathan dropped nine ministers from the Federal Executive Council.

While the leadership of the New Peoples Democratic Party said it was a vendetta as those sacked were sympathetic to its cause, the Presidency said it was a process of retooling.

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