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🕒 January 18, 2017 👤 Leon Usigbe and Bodunrin Kayode, with Agency Report 📁 Top News



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MORE than 50 people were confirmed dead after a Nigerian fighter jet misfired and shot some humanitarian aid workers of the International Committee of Red Cross (ICRC), the Medicines Sans Frontiers and some civilians in Kala Balge in Borno State, during an operation.



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The MSF, otherwise known as Doctors Without Borders, an international organisation whose officials were present at the Rann camp in the state, where the incident was said to have occurred, said another 105 people were injured from the incident.



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Jean-Clément Cabrol, MSF's Director of Operations, said "this large-scale attack on vulnerable people who have already fled from extreme violence is shocking and unacceptable."

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According to the News Agency of Nigeria (NAN), Major-General Lucky Irabor, the Theatre Commander of Operation Lafiya Dole, during a press briefing in Maiduguri, on Tuesday, said it was an error deeply regretted by the military.

The military spokesman, however, said the incident did not occur in an internally displaced persons (IDP) camp as being reported in some quarters but a settlement said to be occupied by civilians.

According to him, it was the air support that mistakenly dropped the bomb.

It was gathered that hospitals in Maiduguri had been told to be prepared to receive and promptly treat the injured.

The incident happened on a day Boko Haram terrorists claimed responsibility for suicide attacks on University of Maiduguri, also in the state, killing four persons, including a professor.

Major-General Irabor, during the briefing, said "this morning, we received a report about the gathering of Boko Haram terrorists around Kala Balge area of Maiduguri.

"I coordinated and I directed that the air component of the operation should go and address the problem.

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"Unfortunately, the strike was conducted, but it turned out that other civilians were somewhere around the area and they were affected.

"So far, it is a little bit disturbing; death has occurred. There are casualties; there were deaths and injuries but on the actual number of casualties, we would get back to you later.

"I am yet to get the number of casualties of civilians killed, but two soldiers were also affected.

"Some humanitarian staff of Medicines, Sans Frontiers and some staff of International Committee of Red Cross (ICRC) were also affected.

"We are sending helicopters to evacuate those that were critically wounded, including our wounded soldiers," Irabor said.

Meanwhile, President Muhammadu Buhari has received with sadness and regret, the accidental bombing of a civilian community in Rann by the Nigerian Air Force engaged in the final phase of mopping up insurgents in the North-East.

A statement issued by his Special Adviser on Media and Publicity, Femi Adesina, in Abuja, said the president condoled with families of the dead, wished the wounded divine succour, leading to full recovery, and sympathised with the state government.

Buhari pledged federal help for the state government in attending to "this regrettable operational mistake," and pleaded for calm, even as he prayed God to grant repose to the souls of the dead.

Governor Kashim Shettima has, therefore, directed the state Ministry of Health to set up an emergency committee with all medical facilities in Maiduguri involved.

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As of press time, the State Specialist Hospital, Umaru Shehu and Muhammad Shuwa hospitals had all being placed on red alert to carry out emergency treatments of casualties.

Spokesman of the governor, Isa Gusau, said the governor received the news with very deep concern, adding that he had channeled his focus on ensuring that all the victims, particularly those with severe injuries, were provided urgent medical treatment.

As of Tuesday evening, the Red Cross and Red Crescent had deployed a helicopter which was on ground at Rann to begin evacuation of victims, stating that those with the most critical health conditions would be treated first.

Governor Shettima particularly commended the Doctors Without Borders for its rapid response in providing first aid treatment to victims at the scene.

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