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B'Haram kills 56 in Borno mosque, village attacks

AUGUST 13, 2013 BY TEMITAYO FAMUTIMI WITH AGENCY REPORTS 269 COMMENTS



IN yet another bizarre occurrence, suspected members of the violent Islamic sect, Boko Haram, have reportedly gunned down 44 people praying in a mosque in Borno State.

Agency reports on Monday indicated that the killings occurred on Sunday morning at a mosque in Konduga town, about 35 kilometres outside Maiduguri, the Borno State capital city.

A State Security Service agent and a member of a vigilante group working with the military told the *Associated Press* on Monday that they counted the bodies at the mosque after the attack.

A member of the vigilante group, Usman Musa, said four of his colleagues were killed when they responded to calls for help.

Musa said the vigilantes encountered "fierce resistance from heavily armed terrorists," along the way from Maiduguri to Konduga.

The state security agent spoke on condition of anonymity because he was not authorised to talk to reporters.

Musa and the security service agent said the attackers wore military camouflage uniforms used by the Nigerian army, which they might have acquired in one of their attacks on military bases.

On their way back from Konduga, the security forces came upon the scene of another attack at Ngom village, five kilometers outside Maiduguri, where Musa said he counted 12 bodies of civilians.

Twenty-six worshippers at the mosque were hospitalised with gunshot wounds, said a security guard at the emergency ward of Maiduguri Teaching Hospital. He and the state security agent both spoke on condition of anonymity because they were not allowed to give information to reporters.

Agency reports also indicated that the leader of the Boko Haram sect, Ibrahim Shekau, boasted in a video that his members had killed many soldiers.

In a video received by journalists Monday, Shekau reportedly brushed off any gains asserted by the security forces.

"You soldiers have claimed that you are powerful, that we have been defeated, that we are mad people," Shekau said in the local Hausa language.

He added, "But how can a mad man successfully coordinate recent attacks in Gamboru, in Malam Fatori, slaughter people in Biu, kill in Gwoza and in Bama, where soldiers fled under our heavy fire power?"

"We have killed countless soldiers and we are going to kill more. We can now comfortably confront the United States of America."

On Christmas Day in 2011, Boko Haram members attacked St. Theresa's Catholic Church in Madalla, Niger State, killing at least 43 parishioners.

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When our correspondent contacted the Director of Defence Information, Brig.-Gen Chris Olukolade, he said that he was not aware of the killings in the Borno mosque.

"I am not aware of this incident. I have not received any official briefing on this incident you are talking about," Olukolade said.

The violent sect has been responsible for at least 2,000 deaths since 2009 when it began a violent campaign against the Federal Government and its varied targets have included churches, mosques, drinking joints, military and police facilities.

Just last week, the terrorists attacked a barricade mounted by the Joint Military Task Force in Gonori, Yobe State, killing six soldiers and two policemen.

A state of emergency to curb the sect has been on in Yobe, Borno and Adamawa states since May 14.

Meanwhile, the United States government has said that it has sent out invitations to some of the 19 governors in northern Nigeria to deliberate on ending the Boko Haram insurgency.

The US Mission in Nigeria said a senior delegation from the US State Department expected in the country for the 9th meeting of the US-Nigeria Bi-National Commission, scheduled for Abuja on August 15, would hold discussions with the governors.

United States Consul-General, Mr. Jeffrey Hawkins, stated this during a "Roundtable with Opinion Leaders on the US-Nigeria Bilateral Relationships" in Lagos on Monday.

Hawkins said the rationale behind the planned meeting was to have the "inputs" of the governors as part of efforts by the White House to collaborate with the Nigerian government in ending terrorism in the country.

He added that the discussions with the governors would involve the leader of the American delegation, the United States Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs, Wendy Sherman; an Assistant Secretary in the US Department of Defence, high ranking Deputy Assistant Secretaries of States from the State Department, and officials from the US-Africa Command among others.

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