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B'Haram murders 106 in fresh attack

FEBRUARY 17, 2014 BY EMMA ANYA, FIDELIS SORIWEI AND KAYODE IDOWU WITH AGENCY REPORT 154

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Members of the boko haram sect

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Gunmen believed to be Boko Haram Islamists on Saturday night continued their reign of terror by killing dozens of people in Izghe, a village in Gwoza Local Government Area of Borno State.

The latest killings came barely a few hours before President Goodluck Jonathan reiterated his belief that Boko Haram activities represented Nigeria's "share of the negative news" across the world.

Only last Tuesday, the fundamentalists snuffed lives out of no fewer than 67 people in Konduga in Borno State. Late last month, the sect killed over 115 people, including

worshippers, in two communities in Borno and Adamawa states.

The gunmen reportedly rounded up a group of men in Izghe, a largely Christian community and shot them during the attack that lasted about five hours.

Residents, who fled the area said some of the victims were shot, while others had their throats slit by the attackers who were chanting "Allah is great."

"All the dead bodies of the victims are still lying in the streets," a resident, Abubakar Usman, told *Reuters*.

"We fled without burying them, fearing the terrorists were still lurking in the bushes."

There were however conflicting casualty figures given by some prominent indigenes of the area.

While Ali Ndume, who represents the area in the Senate told the *Agence France Presse* that about 106 people were murdered, a resident put the figure at 93.

"So far, from information I have received from Izghe, 106 people, including an old woman, have been killed by the attackers, suspected to be Boko Haram gunmen," Ndume said.

The resident, Mallam Bulama, told journalists in Maiduguri, Borno State, that the Islamists, who were dressed in military uniform, invaded the community "killing 93 people, and inflicting injuries on several others."

"As I speak to you (journalists), many residents of Izghe are missing and those lucky enough to be alive have started leaving."

Bulama added that the terrorists who were about 100 came with sophisticated weapons and shot sporadically before setting many houses and shops ablaze.

Funeral rites were held for 52 Muslim victims at the central mosque in the nearby town of Madagali, mosque

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officials said.

Another survivor, Barnabas Idi, also told the *AFP* that he scaled the fence of his house and crawled for about 40 minutes to safety.

"The attackers came around 9.30 pm in six trucks and some motorcycles. They were dressed in military uniform. They asked men to assemble at a place and then started hacking and slaughtering them," he said.

Idi, who added that security agents were not present during the attack, said some of the insurgents moved from door-to-door looking for those in hiding in their houses.

A Maiduguri resident and an indigene of the troubled community, Adamu Izge, said he lost his father-in-law to the siege.

"The insurgents stormed the area on Saturday night wearing military uniform and carrying sophisticated weapons. They launched massive attack on the village, killing many and wounding others. Some people, as I talk now, are missing," Adamu added.

He said the insurgents razed down many houses and even trailed some of those that escaped to nearby villages.

Adamu stated that Izghe indigenes in Maiduguri had expressed their displeasure at both the Federal and Borno State governments over incessant attacks on their village.

Lamenting that Gwoza, Bama, Konduga and Damboa in the state had been under Boko Haram siege, he called on the Federal Government to deploy more military personnel and equipment in the communities.

The LGA Chairman, Maina Ularamu, who confirmed the attack had earlier told the *AFP* in Abuja that over 60 people lost their lives.

He said, "The gunmen killed many people in the attack late on Saturday. From the latest information I have gathered, more than 60 people have been killed.

"We suspect that the gunmen were members of Boko Haram. They have taken over the village.

"They looted businesses and food stores and loaded all their spoils into vehicles owned by residents and fled into the bush."

Lamenting that the attack had made hundreds of villagers homeless, he said that he was about to return to Maiduguri to face the security and humanitarian challenges created by the raid.

A military spokesman in the area, Lt. Col. Mohammed Dole, told the *AFP* he had not been briefed on the attack. Also, the Borno State Commissioner of Police, Alhaji Lawal Tanko, could not give the number of casualties.

Meanwhile, the authorities of the Nigerian Army have deployed more men in Borno State to strengthen the Special Forces.

Investigations on Sunday revealed that between 800 and 850 soldiers from the 82 Division of the Army in Enugu were sent to strengthen the military presence in the troubled state.

Fresh facts also emerged on Sunday on why the Special Forces could not foil the onslaught on Konduga by Boko Haram.

A source said that the soldiers deployed in the community could not penetrate the Boko Haram blockade because of the high calibre weapons used by the insurgents.

It was gathered that while the soldiers who were drafted from Maiduguri, about 40 kilometres from the troubled town, were armed with AK-47 assault rifles, the insurgents wielded long range assault weapons like RPG, Browning Machine Guns and AA-12 Combat rifles.

The fate of the people of Konduga was said to have been made more precarious as an Air Support Operation from the Nigerian Air Force couldn't bring them relief.

Investigations revealed that Air Force helicopter gunships deployed in the area could not drop any bomb because the insurgents mingled with the people of the community.

It was gathered that after hovering in the sky for some time, the fighter planes returned to base.

Our source, who asked not to be named because he was not authorised to speak on the issue said, "You

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know that soldiers responded immediately when the information came. I think, the team that was sent to the place couldn't penetrate it because the Boko Haram members were armed with long-range weapons.

"They were carrying Rocket Propelled Grenade, AA-12, which is very deadly and which shatters the body when it hits a target, and Browning Assault rifles.

"The soldiers had to retreat to base because they went with AK 47 rifles, which are not as strong as the weapons in the hands of these people."

But the Director, Army Public Relations, Brig.-Gen. Olajide Laleye, dismissed insinuation that the insurgents were better equipped than the soldiers.

He told one of our correspondents in Abuja, on Sunday, that the Army had "all the weapons that were mentioned."

Laleye added, "You don't know the instructions given to the soldiers so you cannot say they did not enter there or that they went back to base.

"The way we conduct our operations is not something that we discuss on the pages of newspapers.

"I think we should allow the Army to conduct this operation; at the end of the day if we don't succeed, we should be held responsible. We have kept this country protected and defended her territorial integrity since independence. Is it now that we will not do so?

"We are a well equipped Army; we have more equipment; we are a standard Army. Our troops are well equipped; there is nothing the terrorists have that we don't have and I can tell you that we have more. We are a standard Army, we are not like Boko Haram."

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