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47 killed as B'Haram attacks Bama again

FEBRUARY 20, 2014 BY FIDELIS SORIWEI AND KAYODE IDOWU 107 COMMENTS

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Boko Haram members

Rampaging members of the Boko Haram Sect have struck again in Bama, the headquarters of the Bama Local Government Area and Buratai, Biu LGA in Borno State.

During the fresh Bama attack on Wednesday morning, 47 people lost their lives.

The attackers were said to have also torched the palace of the Shehu of Bama, Alhaji Kyari Elkanemi, the LGA headquarters, and nearly all other key public buildings in the town.

Elkanemi's whereabouts were unknown as of 9pm on Wednesday.

The attackers were however more daring in the Buratai incident on Tuesday evening as they stormed the private and family homes of the Commander of the Joint Task Force in the Niger Delta, Maj. Gen. Tukur Buratai.

One person was said to have been killed in Buratai's family house and a soldier in his private residence in the village.

The Bama attack occurred barely a few hours after the Chief of Army Staff, Maj.Gen Kenneth Minimah, and the Chief of Air Staff, Air Marshal Adesola Amosu, visited the community which had been attacked several times by the insurgents.

They also took place barely three days after 146 people lost their lives during a raid on Izghe, a largely Christian community in Borno State.

The state police commissioner, Lawal Tanko, who confirmed the death toll to Reuters, however did not provide further details about the latest attack.

Tanko said, "Every landmark building, the Local government secretariat, the state lowcost housing estate, schools and several other buildings, as well as a part of the Shehu's palace were destroyed.

"As of the last time I spoke to my DPO in Bama, we had 47 dead casualties recorded, while several number of persons were confirmed injured. Some are already in hospitals there. I have instructed my men to liaise with the hospitals if we can have the actual figure of the dead."

A survivor of the attack told Agence France Presse that assailants drove into the town in heavy trucks through a secondary school.

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He said, "We realised that they were in hundreds carrying sophisticated weapons. So we had to run as the soldiers on guard also took to their heels."

The survivor, who said that he escaped to Maiduguri on foot, added that his other colleagues ran into a nearby Bama General Hospital before fleeing into the bush.

He added, "The attackers set everywhere ablaze using Improvised Explosive Devices as they moved.

"As we ran, we kept seeing burnt houses, dead bodies and injured persons."

The Senator representing Borno Central, Ahmed Zannah, told the *British Broadcasting Corporation Hausa Service* that several persons were killed in the attack.

He also said that many properties were destroyed in the town.

Someone that called in from Bama during the *BBC* programme, claimed that among those killed were five prominent persons from the town.

The anonymous caller said, "I can tell you that several persons were killed. The hoodlums went from one house to the other, killing people at will. They went about burning shops and shooting severely into the air."

A military source told one of our correspondents that four suicide bombers, who were among the insurgents, attacked a tank belonging to the Special Forces in Bama but ended up blowing up themselves to pieces.

He added that a soldier, who was operating the tank, lost his life when he was hit by a shrapnel.

The source said, "The attackers came this time with suicide bombers. Four of the bombers died during the operation.

"They tried to climb one of the tanks of the Nigerian Army and succeeded in dislodging it but they all died. Their bodies were strewn with bombs."

It was learnt that the Boko Haram insurgents, on arrival in Bama around 4am on Wednesday, first crippled a telecommunication mast belonging to Airtel, before invading and torching the Emir's palace and public buildings.

Another military source told one of our correspondents that by the time the militants left the community, the only public buildings left standing were those in the Senior Boys Science College and the College of Education.

He said, "These people went to Bama again. They commenced the operation around 4am. They cut off telecommunication services in the town by successfully crippling Airtel Mast in the town.

"This time, they burnt all the major buildings in the town except those in the Senior Boys Science College and the College of Education.

"They burnt the palace of the Emir, and all other important places in the town."

The Director of Defence Information, Maj.-Gen. Chris Olukolade, who also confirmed it, said that soldiers had taken control of the town.

He said, "Bama came under attack; eventually it was repelled; the troops repelled the attack and they have asserted control over the town.

"We are doing cordon and search both to apprehend the fleeing insurgents and to determine the casualty figure in the attack."

When contacted, the Director, Army Public Relations, Brig.-Gen Olajide Laleye, said, "I can confirm to you that there was an attack at Bama this morning (Wednesday).

He said that soldiers killed a large number of the insurgents during the attack.

"The insurgents were killed enmasse. It was one of the greatest victories that we have had since the operation started," Laleye added.

Laleye, who stated that Minimah and Amosu were still on a tour of military formations in Borno, Adamawa and Yobe states, denied that a Nigerian Army tank was destroyed by the insurgents.

Boko Haram members had attacked and burnt a part of the the Military Barracks in Bama in December

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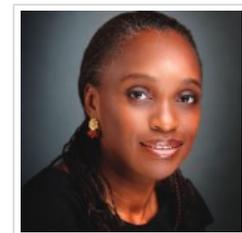
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2013. They had killed 55 people in an earlier attack on the same town on May 8, 2013.

The dead included 22 police officers, 14 prison officials, two soldiers and four civilians. Thirteen of the insurgents also died.

A source in Burutai said that a carpenter was killed while another resident was injured by the insurgents in the family home of the JTF boss.

The source, who said the militants totally razed the general's family house at about 6pm on Tuesday, added that they were not successful when they attacked his personal house.

He said they received some resistance from the soldiers on guard. He however added that a soldier was killed in the exchange of gunfire.

Meanwhile, Boko Haram leader, Abubakar Shekau, has in a new video released on Wednesday, threatened to attack on oil installations in the Niger Delta.

"You will in coming days see your refinery bombed," Shekau warned in the 28-minute video obtained by the AFP.

"Niger Delta, you are in trouble," he warned in Hausa.

The video was shot in an open field, where Shekau was surrounded by an armoured tank, two military vans and about a dozen gun-bearing soldiers.

In the video, Shekau, who admitted killing an Islamic cleric, Adam Albani, in Zaria about two weeks ago, also threatened to kill other Muslim and political figures, including the Shehu of Borno, and the Emir of Kano, Ado Bayero.

"The reason why I will kill you is that you are infidels. You follow democracy. Whoever follows democracy is an infidel. This is Shekau. This is why I am in enmity with you," he said, his comments interspersed with gunshots fired in the air by him and his aides.

Bayero was attacked by suspected Islamists last year.

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