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Soldiers flee as B'Haram kills 37 in Adamawa

FEBRUARY 28, 2014 BY FIDELIS SORIWEI AND KAYODE IDOWU WITH AGENCY REPORTS

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Chief of Army Staff, General Kenneth Minimah

Last Tuesday it was Yobe State where 59 schoolchildren were massacred. On Wednesday, the bloodletting extended to Adamawa State where Boko Haram terrorists, armed with rocket-propelled grenades nearly sacked four communities.

An official death toll in the attacks was not available as of 9.40pm on Thursday. But the *British Broadcasting Corporation* Hausa Service put it at 37 while the *Agence France Presse* reported 33.

Banks, shops, part of a local government secretariat and houses were reported to have been looted and burnt during the six-hour simultaneous raids on the three communities – Michika, Gulak, Shuwa and Krichinga – by the militants.

It was gathered that in Shuwa, Madagali Local Government Area, a repeat of the Yobe massacre was averted when the insurgents attacked the Christians Teacher College, Christian Secondary School and a Catholic Convent.

A resident told *The PUNCH* that the head of the Christian Secondary School, on hearing gunshots in the community, advised his pupils to run into nearby bushes to avoid being killed by the terrorists.

The resident, who declined to give his name, added that when the hoodlums eventually arrived and saw the school deserted, they burnt down almost all the structures on the premises.

He however did not say if all the pupils came out of the bushes unhurt since the incident took place at night.

A pastor in Shuwa told the AFP that soldiers retreated when the armed insurgents invaded the community.

"When the soldiers at the military checkpoints saw the number of the attackers, they retreated into the nearby bushes as the gunmen operated without challenge during the operation that lasted throughout the night," the cleric said.

It was also gathered that among the over 20 persons killed in Shuwa, was a priest at St. Augustine Catholic Church.

The home of a former commissioner in the state, Idris Nuhu, was among those burnt in the community.

In Michika, Michika LGA, another group of Boko Haram gunmen burnt three banks, a police station, part of the Michika LGA secretariat and shops.

A resident, who identified himself simply as Fide, told the *News Agency of Nigeria*, that the attackers, who arrived in nine vans firing guns and throwing explosives, killed a banker and a villager.

Fide said, "They burnt three banks, a police station, shops and part of the Michika LGA secretariat.

"One of the dead body is that of a member of staff of the Bank of Agriculture."

Some other residents of Michika said they slept in the hills and nearby bushes during the mayhem that lasted for about five hours.

The BBC Hausa Service quoted witnesses as saying that some of those killed in Michika and Shuwa either had gunshot wounds or had their throats slit.

The Chairman of the Michika LGA, Ulama Maina, confirmed to journalists that banks, police station, shops and some houses were torched.

Maina however did not give the casualty figure.

The spokesman for the 23rd Armoured Brigade, Yola, Capt. Ja'afaru Nuhu, who also confirmed that communities in Madagali and Michika LGAs were attacked, told *NAN* that details of the incident would be released at a later stage.

Grace Hassan, an indigene of Michika, told *The Punch* that the attacks that started at about 8pm lasted till 2am, adding that information at her disposal indicated that the mayhem sent fears into the hearts of residents of Lassa, a neighbouring town in Borno State.

According to her, the residents of the community fled into the bushes to avoid being killed.

A resident of Lassa, Peter Satumari, said many of them fled their homes into the bushes when the sound of gunshots and explosives were becoming unbearable.

Satumari said, "No one could sleep because of the sound of gunshots which we thought were being fired from our village. We had to run into the bushes believing they might come to attack our houses.

"It was later on Thursday morning that we saw smoke billowing from afar and got to know there were attacks in Shuwa, Gulak and Michika, all in Adamawa State."

It was also gathered that the sect attacked Krichinga, a village about five kilometres east of Shuwa. There, four people lost their lives and many were injured.

A furious governor of the state Gov. Murtala Nyako suggested there must be collusion with the Boko Haram terrorist network.

Nyako, a former navy chief of staff, said the attacks ridiculed President Goodluck Jonathan's insistence that the military was winning the war against Islamic militants.

When Borno state Governor Kashim Shettima claimed that Boko Haram fighters were “better armed and better motivated,” than the troops fighting them, Jonathan upbraided him.

The Defence Headquarters has however launched what it described as specialised campaign against the Boko Haram insurgents.

The Director of Defence Information, Maj.-Gen. Chris Olukolade, said during a news conference in Abuja on Thursday, that the campaign had already taken off in Borno, Yobe and Adamawa states which are under emergency rule.

He explained that part of the arrangement was to pursue and prevent the insurgents from escaping from the country.

The Defence spokesman said that terrorists fleeing towards Nigeria's borders with Cameroun had severely attacked some communities in desperation for food and money.

He said, “The purpose of this briefing is to intimate you with the elevation of counter terrorism campaign in the country. The new approach marks another phase in the operations designed to further contain the terrorists and their activities.

“The specialised campaign which has commenced is being undertaken simultaneously in Yobe, Borno and Adamawa states. This operation is also in furtherance of efforts at apprehending the terrorists and ensuring they do not escape out of Nigeria as they are now desperate to do.

“Unfortunately, however, they have in the course of their flight towards various borders, continued to perpetrate mayhem as noticed in some parts of Adamawa State yesterday (Wednesday), where they attacked communities.

“In desperation for money and food, they looted and burnt banks, shops and filling stations along their way through Michika as they headed for the Camerounian border.”

Olukolade said that three civilians and a soldier were killed in the attacks on the Adamawa communities while six insurgents were gunned down and two captured alive.

He said that the DHQ believed that the insurgents who attacked the Federal Government College, Buni Yadi in Yobe State were the same people behind the Michika onslaught.

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