

2nd March, 2014

<http://www.punchng.com>

Borno: 35 die in Boko Haram twin attacks

MARCH 2, 2014 BY JOHN ALECHENU, FIDELIS SORIWEI KAMARUDEEN OGUNDELE AND KAYODE IDOWU

23 Comments (<http://www.punchng.com/news/borno-35-die-in-boko-haram-twin-attacks/#comments>)



(<http://www.punchng.com/news/borno-35-die-in-boko-haram-twin-attacks/?print=1>)



Boko Haram

No fewer than 35 persons were killed after twin bombs exploded in Maiduguri, Borno State, on Saturday.

Boko Haram's wave of terror attacks on people and public institutions has gone up in recent times.

The sect on Tuesday attacked Federal Government College, Buni Yadi, Yobe State, killing no fewer than 43 pupils. It had also attacked the Christian Teachers' College; Christian Secondary School and a Catholic convent, all in Shuwa, Madagali Local Government Area of Adamawa State on Thursday.

Eyewitnesses told journalists that the bombs were packaged in a firewood truck, believed to have taken-off from the Sambisa Forest in Dam Boa Local Government Area of the state.

An eyewitness, Mohammed Buba, said the blasts occurred at about 6 p.m. when most residents were preparing for evening prayer.

"Nobody can say exactly how it happened, the first blast occurred just about 15 minutes before the second one.

"Only few people were injured by the first blast, but while people were trying to rescue the victims of the first blast, the second one occurred, killing many people, in a close vicinity," Mohammed said.

Another witness, Mrs. Felicia Odelanu, who spoke via phone from the scene of the incident, said the explosion claimed many lives, especially those selling fried bean-cake, fish and barbecue.

Odelanu said the twin explosion shook the entire area like an earthquake and that many people in the area were still in fear, suspecting that another bomb might have been planted in the area.

The Commissioner of Police in Borno, Lawal Tanko, confirmed the blasts, and said 35 bodies had been evacuated.

"We are still counting far, we have counted 35 bodies. Our men are still working with rescue workers at the scene" Tanko told the *News Agency of Nigeria*.

Based on these fresh terror attacks, our correspondent in Abuja authoritatively gathered that the 23 Brigade situated in Yola and the newly created 7th Division in Maiduguri, have been ordered to prepare soldiers for deployment.

Confirming this development, the Director, Defence Information, Maj. Gen. Chris Olukolade, said, "The High Command of the campaign is closely monitoring the operations in a careful manner. Troops deployment will continue to be in line with its assessment of progress or development in the operational area. The use of resources for the mission will be maximised towards attaining the most effective result possible."

Meanwhile, the Federal Government is considering the option of closing all unity schools in Borno, Yobe and Adamawa states following the attacks on schools in the region by the Boko Haram sect.

Apart from last week's attacks on schools, in June 2013, Boko Haram killed eight pupils and a teacher during an attack on the Government Secondary School, Damaturu, Yobe State. The sect also killed 29 pupils at the Government Secondary School, Mamudu, Yobe State.

Also, not less than 40 students of the College of Agriculture, Gujba, Yobe State were murdered during an attack on the college in September, 2013.

It was gathered that officials of the Federal Ministry of Education would meet this week to take a decision on the remaining schools.

According to 'Nigeria: Digest of Education Statics,' a publication of the Federal Ministry of Education, Adamawa State has 189 public senior secondary schools and 22 private senior secondary schools.

Borno State has 109 public senior secondary schools and 74 private secondary schools. Yobe State, according to the document, has a total of 92 private and public secondary schools.

Our correspondents learnt that following the latest massacre of 43 pupils in Buni Yadi, officials of the Federal Ministry of Education, held series of meetings with principals submitting reports of the situation in their respective schools.

The ministry is also liaising with the Ministry of Defence and other security agencies.

"Officials of the Basic and Secondary Education Department, including principals of the schools, are meeting over the issue. All of them have brought security reports of their schools for consideration," a reliable ministry source who pleaded anonymity, said.

According to another reliable source in the ministry, a principal in one of the attacked schools stated in her report that the Boko Haram members first went to the female hostel and "asked the female pupils to leave and never come back."

"They advised them to go and marry. It was from there they attacked the male hostel," the source added.

When contacted, Simeon Nwakaudu, who is the Special Assistant (Media) to the Minister of Education, Nyesom Wike, confirmed that reports had been submitted by the school principals.

“By next week, the Federal Government would take a final decision on them. The officials are already meeting to consider the desirability or otherwise of closing the schools,” he said without giving details of the report.

Already, Adamawa State College of Education, Hong, has been shut down indefinitely following security concerns.

The provost of the institution, Dr. J.N Tondri, said he took the decision along with members of his management team based on advice by the Army Brigade Commander.

The Director of Press and Public Affairs, Ahmad Sajoh, confirmed the development in a telephone interview with our correspondent, in Abuja, on Friday.

He said, “The provost just informed me about the decision which he said was based on the advice from the brigade commander.”

On Friday, the Principal Public Relations Officers of the Universal Basic Education Commission, Mr. David Apeh, said only the federal and state governments could close down schools.

He said, “It is the federal and state governments that have the powers to close down schools.

“UBEC deals with basic education. The only thing we do for federal unity schools is to build libraries. Federal Government colleges are not directly under us. So we have no power to close them down. Even if it was a primary schools that were attacked, it is not the duty of UBEC; we are an intervention agency.”

Olukolade, said in a telephone conversation with one of our correspondents on Friday, that it was the responsibility of the military and the security agencies to come up with the strategy to ensure the protection of schools.

But a military source told *SUNDAY PUNCH* on Friday in Abuja that it was impossible to deploy soldiers in all boarding schools in Adamawa, Yobe and Borno states, not to talk of the entire North.

The source, who pleaded anonymity, explained that the normal practice was to post soldiers to towns and villages in the states.

According to the source, the nearest soldiers’ location to the Buni Gari school was about seven kilometres from Buna Yadi where the attack took place.

The source, while reacting to the speculation that soldiers posted to the school withdrew 24 hours before the Boko Haram attack, said, “In the first place, soldiers were never deployed to the gate of the school (at Buni Yadi). We don’t deploy in front of schools.

“We have 64 boarding schools in Yobe State, so we can’t start deploying soldiers in front of every school. There was no checkpoint close to Federal Government College; we had no soldier close to the school, and there was no redeployment; that is absolute falsehood.”

A non-governmental organisation, ActionAid Nigeria, had on Thursday in Abuja said not less than 15,000 pupils dropped out of school in Borno State in the last one year because of the activities of Boko Haram.

It had also said the actions of the sect had led to the destruction of no fewer than 800 classrooms and 200 schools in Borno and Yobe states respectively.

Copyright PUNCH.

All rights reserved. This material, and other digital content on this website, may not be reproduced, published, broadcast, rewritten or redistributed in whole or in part without prior express written permission from PUNCH.

Contact: editor@punchng.com (mailto:editor@punchng.com)