

3rd March, 2014

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## Boko Haram destroys Borno village, kills 39

MARCH 3, 2014 BY FIDELIS SORIWEI AND KAYODE IDOWU WITH AGENCY REPORT

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**Scenes of Maiduguri twin bombing blasts ... on Sunday.**

| credits: Reuters, AFP and naija.com

As rescue operations at the scene of Maiduguri's twin bomb blasts progressed on Saturday, another set of Boko Haram insurgents wreaked havoc in Mainok, a village about 50 kilometres from Maiduguri, Borno State.

The insurgents did not only sack the entire village, they killed no fewer than 39 residents.

The British Broadcasting Corporation reported that buildings in the village were still on fire while bodies were lying in front of a mosque waiting to be buried as of Sunday morning.

An eyewitness, who did not give his name, said, "They (insurgents) started shooting everywhere, they started burning all the houses in the village.

"I don't think that there is any house that is standing in the village and they have killed at least 39 people .

"These people have guns – AK47, RPGs and so on; they can come and attack anybody and kill, including women and children, they kill everybody that can see them."

A civil servant, Mustapha Musa, also told journalists that he drove through Mainok on Sunday and saw the whole community in ruins.

He said, "We were in a sober mood over the incident in Maiduguri when we started hearing gunshots and thereafter, they went ahead, hurling explosives on houses. **This (Sunday) morning, we counted 39 bodies.**

"As of 10am **today(Sunday)**, many buildings were still in flames. Almost all the village with hundred of houses have been destroyed by the rampaging insurgents.

"I saw dead bodies in front of the Central Mosque of the village waiting to be buried. The primary school in the village has been burnt. Some vehicles and shops were also burnt."

But a senior officer of the State Security Service, who confirmed the incident, said,

"Mainok was attacked and over 30 people were killed."

A security source said that the insurgents suddenly struck in the village shortly after soldiers moved to their base at Benisheik.

The Boko Haram members were said to be on a reprisal against members of the Volunteer Vigilance Group known as the civilian JTF for informing the military of their activities.

Our source said that the civilian JTF had foiled an earlier attack on Mainok by alerting the military. It was learnt that over 40 insurgents were killed last week by soldiers who laid ambush for them.

The Spokesman for the 7 Infantry Division of the Nigerian Army, Col. Mohammed Dole, confirmed the killing of the over 40 insurgents.

Also, the Special Forces were said to have seized two Toyota Hilux jeeps, three motorcycles and arrested two of the insurgents suspected to have planted the twin bombs that rocked Maiduguri on Saturday.

A security source said that the two insurgents were arrested at the busy Post Office area of Maiduguri in a pick-up van laden with Improvised Explosive Devices. Two AK 47 assault rifles in the van were also seized.

The source said that the two suspects and the seized weapons were taken to the headquarters of Sector 4 of the JTF in Maiduguri.

#### • **Gun battle reported in Mafa LGA**

It was further gathered that the insurgents attacked the Mafa Local Government Area headquarters before a fierce gun battle ensued between them and soldiers in the area.

A source said that the insurgents succeeded in setting some houses ablaze in the area.

There was no casualty figure as of 11pm on Sunday even though fighting was said to be going on as of 10.30pm on Sunday.

#### • **Another tragedy averted, eight insurgents arrested**

But just as death toll in the Maiduguri twin bomb blasts rose from 35 to 52, another a major disaster was averted in the troubled city on Sunday when eight suspected insurgents were arrested at the popular Maiduguri Monday Market.

A trader at the market, Babagana Tijjani, told journalists that four of the insurgents, who were dressed in military uniform were first apprehended while attempting to gain entry into the market.

Tijjani said the arrested terrorists confessed that four of their colleagues had successfully entered the market and were waiting for them before they could strike.

He said, "The four insurgents dressed in military uniform drove from the direction of Custom area in a Toyota Siena. They were suspected by the Civilian JTF guarding the market and were questioned after which they were arrested."

He added that it was during the interrogation that they confessed that four of their colleagues were waiting for them inside the market.

"They said their intention was to shoot and kill people in the market," Tijjani added.

#### • **Maiduguri blasts' death toll hits 52**

Earlier two bombs exploded in a densely populated area of Maiduguri, leaving some persons still trapped in the rubble of a collapsed building.

Our correspondents reported that the death toll had risen from 35 to 52.

It was also learnt on Sunday that seven of the eight suicide bombers that detonated their bombs at the venue of a marriage ceremony in Ajilari- Bintu Sugar, died in the attacks.

Thirty of the blast victims were said to have died on the spot.

As rescuers were busy trying to evacuate the dead and save the injured, the second blast took place, killing 20 others.

A leader of the civilian JTF in Sector 6, Umaru Ahmed, said, "I am part of the team that evacuated 52 bodies from the debris. They were corpses of male and female. Many of them were children and elderly."

He said the 52 bodies were taken to the mortuary of the state specialist hospital while 30 injured persons were moved to the Umaru Shehu Ultra-modern Hospital for treatment.

Ahmed said the bombs were planted in two vans loaded with firewood.

He said the suicide bombers numbering seven pretended as if they were buying food from vendors and therefore drew no suspicion.

Ahmed added that seven of the bombers died in the explosions while one was arrested and handed over to soldiers.

The state Police Commissioner, Lawal Tanko, had earlier told the *Agence France Presse*, that his men counted 35 bodies at the scene of the blasts.

"We are still counting. So far we have counted 35 bodies. Our men are still working with rescue workers at the scene," Tanko said.

A resident, who also spoke with the AFP said he believed that as many as 50 people were killed and dozens of houses razed in the blasts.

He said, "I assisted in pulling dead bodies from the rubble of destroyed homes after the attack last (Saturday) night.

"We took 50 bodies to the Sani Abacha Specialist Hospital with the help of soldiers and the police.

"The bodies included men, women and children. There is so much panic in the area which is mostly deserted. Most people have fled their homes."

Another witness, Mallam Buba, also told the *AFP* that the blasts happened when most residents were preparing for evening prayers and others were busy watching football in a video hall.

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

"Only a few people were injured by the first blast but while people were trying to rescue the victims of the first blast, the second one took place killing many people also."

#### • **Borno govt to assist victims**

The Deputy Governor of the state, Alhaji Zannah Mustapha, has said that an excavator would be sent to the scene to ease the rescue of those trapped in the rubble.

Mustapha told the people on Sunday that Governor Kashim Shettima, who was out of the state, directed him to sympathise with them pending his return.

He said that Shettima also told him to inform them that on his return, he would pay them a visit and assist them financially.

The deputy governor urged the people to take their loss as an act of God and to pray for the repose of the souls of those who lost their lives.

A visit round Maiduguri revealed that the civilian JTF members, who had vacated the streets, were back to their duty posts.

Many youths wielding stick and cutlasses were seen on Sunday mounting roadblocks and checking vehicles for arms.

#### • **Terrorist bases hit, many insurgents killed - DHQ**

Shortly after the Maiduguri incidents, the Defence Headquarters said that several terrorists bases in Daggu and Yazza in Borno State were hit by the military during the weekend.

The Director of Defence Information, Maj. Chris Olukolade, said in an electronic mail on Sunday, that the air operations had achieved some results in the ongoing campaign against the insurgents.

He said that soldiers on mop-up operations confirmed the killing of many insurgents in air raids.

Olukolade said that civilians were evacuated from the areas in consonance with operational guidelines before the commencement of the land and air operations against the insurgents.

He said the military had commenced an extensive cordon and search of the areas in order to arrest wounded and fleeing insurgents.

The Defence spokesman also said that troops in pursuit of the insurgents who attacked the Federal Government College, Buni Yadi, had a fierce gun battle with them "around Mainok and some locations between Apa and Abulum in Borno State."

Olukolade confirmed that some terrorists and soldiers lost their lives in the encounters.

"Also yesterday, troops in pursuit of those who carried out the attack in Buni Yadi last week, had fierce encounters with the terrorists around Mainok and other locations between Apa and Abulum in Borno State.

"The air and land operations that ensued recorded the death of some terrorists. Soldiers also died in the encounters," he said

He also said that the Campaign Coordination Cell had dismissed reports that civilians were mistakenly hit in the air operations in some areas.

He said that the claim was part of the design by some people to discredit the counter-terrorism mission.

Olukolade also confirmed the arrest of some suspects believed to have detonated the twin bombs that killed many people in Maiduguri on Saturday.

#### • Northern govs assure of peace

Also on Sunday, the Northern States Governors' Forum assured Nigerians, especially those living in the troubled North East, that a lot was being done to guarantee peace in the zone.

The forum also said that efforts were being made to save lives and property in the troubled states in the zone.

The Chairman of the forum and Governor of Niger, Dr Babangida Aliyu, in a statement, urged all stakeholders to continue to pray to God to end the killing of defenceless citizens, especially in the North-East.

The statement which was signed by his Spokesman, Danladi Ndayebo, urged the insurgents to lay down their arms and embrace dialogue.

Aliyu made the call in his reaction to Saturday's explosions which killed several persons in Maiduguri.

"The Forum deeply regrets this utterly heinous descent to new depths of terror by the perpetrators at a time when security agencies are doing their best to put an end to it," he said.

He commiserated with the families of those killed or injured during the blasts and called on all security agencies to redouble their efforts in the discharge of their responsibilities.

#### • Sultan calls for prayers

Meanwhile, the Sultan of Sokoto, Alhaji Sa'ad Abubakar III, has called for continuous prayers for peace, unity and development of the country.

Abubakar made the call during a national preaching session organised by an Islamic group, the Jama'atu Izalatul Bidi'a Waikamatus Sunna (JIBWIS) in Kano on Sunday.

Represented by the Emir of Maradun in Zamfara, Alhaji Garba Tambari, the Sultan decried the security challenges in the North, especially the North-East.

As traditional rulers, we have since called for continuous prayers against the insecurity that is gradually taking over some parts of the North," Abubakar III said.

The News Agency of Nigeria quoted him as saying that prayers were necessary in order to ensure peace, unity and development of the country.

Earlier, the National Chairman of the Izala Islamic group, Sheik Sani Jingir, had called for collaborative efforts in the fight against insurgency.

"The fight against insurgency should be a collaborative one, especially among Muslim and Christian communities," he said.

Jingir expressed concern over the killing of innocent persons in the country, and called on the government to do something urgently in order to check the ugly trend.

He said, "One cannot understand why human lives now become so valueless while those who are responsible for the protection of such lives seem to have failed in their responsibility.

"For the fact that lives have become so vulnerable while the insurgents kill at will, there is urgent need for coming together of the adherents of the two religions to rise against the perpetrators of the dastardly acts.

According to him, the activities of the Boko Haram are aimed at giving Islam a bad name so that Muslims will be the target of harassment, undue treatment and unnecessary persecution.

"We are aware that some powerful ungodly minds are behind the activities of the Boko Haram, in an effort to tarnish the beautiful names of Islam and its followers," he said.

The chairman called for the establishment of a joint vigilance groups in all parts of the country to ensure peaceful coexistence.

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