

March 24th, 2014



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Special forces capture B'Haram leader, kill 70 insurgents

MARCH 22, 2014 BY FIDELIS SORIWEI 170 COMMENTS

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Boko Haram members

The campaign against insurgents in the North-East intensified with the capture of a top leader of Boko Haram and the killing of about 70 insurgents at the sect's stronghold in Gwoza Hills, Borno State.

Saturday *PUNCH* investigations revealed that the leader was arrested on Thursday evening while he was trying to flee the bombarded Gwoza Hills with some black *Toyota Land Cruiser* sports utility vehicle in his escort.

It was learnt that the Special Forces captured him alive and flew him immediately

out of Borno State to Abuja for interrogation in one of the military formations in Abuja.

A source, who confided in our correspondent, said that the arrest of the man suspected to be one of the topmost commanders of the sect (if not the leader), had triggered anxiety among security agents in Borno State.

Security officials were of the view that the captured Boko Haram leader might be a very key person to the operation of the sect for him to have such a massive and luxurious escort comprising *Toyota Land Cruiser* vehicles.

The source said, "On Thursday, soldiers arrested a top member of the Boko Haram around the Gwoza Hills after the battle of Wednesday night when troop took over the hills.

"The Boko Haram member must be a very high ranking member of the group if not the head because he had several *Toyota Land Cruiser* jeeps in his escort when he was captured.

"Another thing is that they didn't want anybody to know his identity; the commanders immediately flew the man to Abuja; as we are talking, the man is being interrogated there. A highly placed security source confirmed the arrest of the Boko Haram leader but would not make any further comment on the issue.

Investigations further revealed that troops killed over 70 insurgents at Bita community in Gwoza Local Government Area of Borno State and Bama headquarters of Bama Local Government Area of Borno State.

The insurgents were said to have been killed in two different gun duels with troops at Bita and Bama where Armoured Personnel Carriers and military tanks were fully deployed for the combat on Thursday.

Investigation revealed that the soldiers attacked the insurgents when they were moving to launch an attack on Bita community a day after troops overran their Gwoza Hills enclave on Wednesday.

The source said that some soldiers sustained gunshot wounds and were being treated at a hospital in Maiduguri. It was learnt that some other insurgents were killed also on Thursday evening on their way to Bama



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after the first encounter which resulted in the killing of over 40 members of the sect.

It was gathered that the special forces waited for the convoy of the insurgents on their way to Bama when an intelligence report was received that they (the insurgents) were on their way to launch another attack in Bama.

A security source said that the insurgents were moving in 15 trucks loaded with fighters when they ran into the ambush of the troops.

The source said that the troops destroyed seven of the trucks which caught fire and killed about 30 of the insurgents."

However, it was stated that the insurgents escaped with eight of the vehicles in the convoy.

When our correspondent contacted the Director of Defence Information, Maj. Gen. Chris Olukolade, he confirmed the deployment of APCs and military tanks but asked to be given more time to confirm the capture of the Boko Haram commander and those killed in the two battles.

"That APCs and military tanks were deployed is no news but you have to give me some time to confirm this story from the relevant places," he said.

However, Olukolade said that the troops arrested a middle-aged Cameroonian who served as the arms courier for the sect.

He said that the arrest of the Cameroonian led to the discovery of a large cache of arms and ammunition which was hidden in the premises of a burnt church.

Olukolade said that weapons recovered from the insurgents in the premises of the church in Kalabaghe Local Government Area of Borno State included anti-aircraft guns, rocket-propelled guns, other brands of machine guns and thousands of various calibres of rounds of ammunition.

He said that the Cameroonian led troops on a cordon and search operation to a hideout where a terrorist was captured. He was silent on the rank of this particular terrorist whose singular arrest featured in his news statement.

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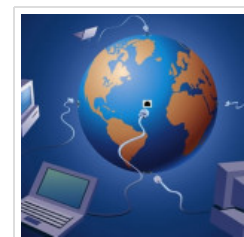
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