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Boko Haram bombs market, kills 29 in Borno

MARCH 24, 2014 BY ADEMOLA BABALOLA, JUDE OWUAMANAM WITH AGENCY REPORTS 145 COMMENTS

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SUSPECTED members of the violent Islamic sect, Boko Haram, have again bombed a market in Nguro-Soye, near Bama, Borno State, killing no fewer than 29 persons.

Reuters reported on Sunday that the attack on the market was said to have been carried out on Saturday night.

"I travelled to Bama to buy bags of beans. Suddenly, there was a deafening bang at the middle of the market. It was in the late afternoon and commercial activities were at their peak," said Shuaibu Abdulahi, a trader

at the market. He estimated the death toll to be as high as 29.

Abba Tahir, a bus driver who was said to be offloading passengers at the market during the incident, said he counted 20 bodies.

"People were helping in evacuating the corpses after the confusion had died down. Some people who were injured were taken to the general hospital," Tahir added.

There was no claim of responsibility for the attack yet as of the time of this report.

Borno State Police Commissioner., Mr. Lawal Tanko, who confirmed the incident, was quoted as saying, "An explosion in the market in Nguro-Soye killed 17 people."

Bama is a border town and the headquarter of the Bama Local Government Area of Borno State. It is about 135 kilometres from Maiduguri, the state capital.

The town is not new to attacks by the Boko Haram insurgents. The 202 Army Battalion Barracks located in the town was hit by Boko Haram in December 2013.

Several women and children, mostly wives and wards of soldiers, who battled the insurgents for over seven hours, were killed in the attack launched at about 3 am.

On February 19 this year, the insurgents also attacked Bama. Confirming the February attack, Governor Kashim Shettima had said the attackers "inflicted a lot of damage on the town." A Borno State senator, Ahmed Zanna, had then told the BBC that the attack on Bama lasted for five hours.

Boko Haram has killed well over 1,500 people in the North-East zone since the sect launched its war against the Federal Government.

In the course of their bombing campaign, the insurgents have attacked military and police facilities, worship houses, markets and drinking joints.

At the height of the Boko Haram notoriety in May last year, the Federal Government slammed a six-month


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state of emergency on three north-eastern states of Yobe, Adamawa and Borno.

The emergency measure was renewed for another six months in November but while the military claimed to be having the upper hand in the battle against the insurgents, the sect members continued to launch attacks with devastating consequences on the civilian population.

On February 24, the insurgents attacked the Federal Government College, Buni Yadi, in the Gujba Local Government Area of Yobe State.

Yobe State Police Commissioner, Sanusi Rufai, had then said that 29 male students were killed during the attack but at least 40 students were believed to have been murdered.

The insurgents, who reportedly severed the heads of many of the victims, also burnt down buildings in the school.

The development forced the Federal Government to announce early in March the closure of its five unity schools in the North-East.

Meanwhile, security agents in a church in Jos, Plateau State, on Sunday prevented an attack on worshippers by gunmen suspected to be Fulani herdsmen.

The gunmen were said to have targeted the church located at the Rantya low cost area of Nyago Gyel district in the Jos South Local Government Area. They had descended from the hills and were about to launch the attack when a member of the church's security team spotted them.

Though the gunmen, in their hundreds, immediately started shooting sporadically in the direction of the church, they were repelled by men of the Special Task Force.

An eyewitness, Mr. Godwin Okoko, told one of our correspondents that but for the vigilance of the police and soldiers attached to the STF, who responded to distress calls by the worshippers, the gunmen would have succeeded.

Okoko said about 1,000 people were in the church at about 10am preparing to commence Sunday worship "when the gunmen started descending from the hills and started shooting but were swiftly repelled by men of the STF."

Okoko is the country coordinator of a non-governmental organisation, Apurimac Onlus.

Plateau State Police Commissioner, Mr. Chris Olakpe, confirmed the incident to our correspondent on Sunday.

He said that no life was lost and nobody was arrested.

"My men got a distress call that some gunmen were planning to attack a church as the worshippers were about to commence service. We stormed the area and there was a heavy exchange of gunfire between the gunmen and a combined force of policemen and STF."

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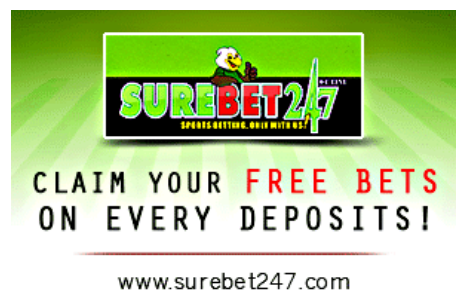
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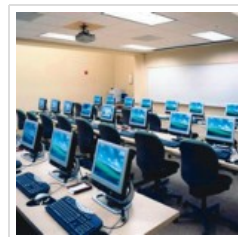
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