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11 soldiers died in Baga Army base attack

JANUARY 6, 2015 BY KAYODE IDOWU WITH AGENCY REPORT 111 COMMENTS

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Over 11 soldiers and scores of civilians were reportedly killed when the Boko Haram sect attacked the army base in Baga, Borno State on Saturday, a security source and witnesses said on Monday.

The Islamists attacked the northeastern town of Baga and the barracks on its outskirts on Saturday, potentially providing a launchpad for more attacks in the country and other neighbouring nations.

Lying at the end of a semi-desert road, Baga is the headquarters of a multinational force comprising troops from Niger, Nigeria, Chad and Cameroon.

Soldiers and civilians had fled the town after the attack on the Army base.

Unconfirmed report also said that 18 female soldiers attached to the base were feared dead as they had not been found since the invasion.

The group's five year insurgency to establish an Islamic state has killed many thousands in Africa's top economy and most populous nation. More than 10,000 died in the violence last year, the Council on Foreign Relations says.

Witnesses who escaped to the bush said they ran past the bodies of soldiers and civilians along the way.

"I was hiding on a tree top since that Saturday night until this morning at 3 a.m.," Abubakar Usman, a Baga resident, told *Reuters* by telephone.

"Women in a nearby house brought us water and food ... We snuck out and on our way, we saw lots of dead soldiers and 10 bodies of women."

A military source said at least 11 soldiers had been killed along with a large number of civilians around the town, which was still in the militants' hands on Monday.

He said they set fire to houses and shot at residents as they tried to flee. The military did not immediately respond to a request for official comment.

"They are still there and many people (civilians) mostly women, children and aged one are still trapped in the town," a man who works between the city of Maiduguri and Baga said.

Another witness, who gave his name only as Yusuf, said he tripped and fell as he tried to flee the town. When

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he got up, he saw about 20 bodies scattered along the ground where he was.

On Saturday, it was reported that the sect killed 15 people when they attacked a bus in Cameroon.

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"I say again, whoever that person may be, I want you to get that correctly. If this country is going to change for the better, it must start from the top and if it's going to be otherwise, it must start from the top too."

Former President Olusegun Obasanjo, saying Nigeria is currently facing economic problems due to the failure of the present administration to plan for a rainy day.