

# Abandoned Boko Haram bombs explode, kill 20

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with agency report

**A**N abandoned sack containing Improvised Explosive Devices exploded in Monguno, Borno State, killing and injuring many members of the Civilian Joint Task Force and residents.

Eyewitnesses gave different figures on the death toll. While one of our correspondents was told by a resident that 20 people lost their lives, the *Associated Press* first reported 23 and later updated it to 63.

The resident told *The PUNCH* that Boko Haram members had abandoned the black "strange sack" while fleeing from the civilian JTF team on Tuesday evening. But another told the AP that the civilian JTF, which is made up of local vigilantes, saw the sack in an abandoned Boko Haram camp.

According to the resident, the civilian JTF members spotted the sack on a street and after a prolonged argument on what to do, one of them decided to pick it up.

Tragedy however struck when the IEDs exploded at a point where the team was about to open the sack to unravel its contents. The injured and the dead included anxious residents who had raced to the spot on learning of the "strange sack."

A member of the civilian JTF, who also spoke to one of our correspondents said, "Our team was moving round the town after

chasing away some insurgents who had tried to attack us. But in the process, they spotted a strange black polythene bag. One of the team members took the sack to our gathering place.

"But many people had come to know the contents of the sack but before we knew it, a series of explosions happened. About 20 people died in the process. Many, I think, 43 were also wounded."

The Head of the Borno State Hospital Management Board, Salisu Kwayabura, however said that 54 victims were taken to the State Specialist Hospital in Maiduguri.

Kwayabura told Governor Kashim Shettima, who visited the hospital, that of the 54, 13 persons were brought in dead while 13 were treated and released.

Another witness, Haruna Bukar, told the AP that the civilian JTF discovered a Boko Haram camp and found the strange black sack which they took to Monguno.

AP quoted its correspondent as reporting that "while celebrating this discovery, at least one of the IEDs went off killing and injuring people who had gathered around."

## Command Centre to be operational in 21 days

Meanwhile, the Nigeria Army has said that its Command and Control Centre in Maiduguri and Yola will become operational in 21 days when the installation of hi-tech

equipment and infrastructural development would have been completed.

A statement on Wednesday by the Acting Director, Army Public Relations, Col. Sani Usman, added that posting of more operational staff had commenced following the deployment of a reconnaissance and an advance team to the centre last week.

It said that the Chief of Army Staff and Chief of Air Staff were at the MCCC to monitor activities there last Tuesday.

With the establishment of the Centre, the Army said all strategic and operational decisions on the fight against terrorism would emanate from the MCCC.

This, it added, would ensure faster response time, improved situational awareness and better coordination of all stakeholders.

The statement read, "The installations of hi-tech equipment, infrastructural development of the centre and posting of additional operations staff have also commenced.

"These are to be completed within 21 days when the MCCC would be fully operational. The centre will also give the needed impetus that would ensure prosecution and successful conclusion of the war against terrorism."

The military said the centre would also provide the required interface between the Armed Forces and the Multi-National Joint Task Force to be deployed at the Lake Chad Basin at the end of July 2015.

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