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Buhari orders military checkpoints' removal, B'Haram kills 13

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Soldiers at a checkpoint on Oba Adesida Road, Akure

| credits: Stanley Ogidi

President Muhammadu Buhari on Monday ordered the removal of military checkpoints set up in the wake of Boko Haram activities in parts of the country.

The order was given a few hours after twin bomb blasts rocked Maiduguri, Borno State on Monday. Thirteen people lost their lives and many others were injured in the incident.

The Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Defence, Aliyu Ismaila, told State House correspondents that Buhari ordered the removal of the checkpoints during his meeting with service chiefs at the Presidential Villa, Abuja.

"The President has instructed the Chief of Defence Staff to get the Chief of Army Staff and Inspector-General of Police to remove all the military men along the roads across the country," he said.

It will be recalled that motorists in places where the checkpoints exist have been facing a harrowing experience because of gridlocks caused by them (checkpoints).

One of the worst hit is the Abuja-Keffi highway and some other roads in the Federal Capital Territory.

Ismaila added that Buhari challenged the security chiefs to do more in the war against insurgency because of the leadership he was providing as a retired military officer.

But the Presidency later issued a statement in which it explained that the order for the removal of the checkpoints affected only secure parts of the country.

The statement by the Senior Special Assistant to the President on Media and Publicity, Mallam Garba Shehu, quoted the President as saying that the soldiers must concentrate more on ending insurgency in the country.

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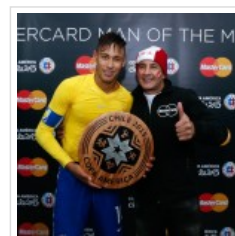


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According to the statement, the checkpoints shall be retained in areas outside the North-Eastern states where the military considered them absolutely essential for the maintenance of national security.

It read, "Reaffirming his administration's total commitment to ending the Boko Haram insurgency in the shortest possible time, the President welcomed the progress report he was given on the implementation of his order that the Military Command Control Centre be relocated to Maiduguri.

"President Buhari who, in keeping with the declared priorities of his government, made the meeting with defence and security chiefs the top item on his schedule on his first day at work in the Presidential Villa, also expressed satisfaction at the progress made so far in the implementation of the decision of the Lake Chad Basin Commission to fast-track the deployment of the Multinational Joint Task Force based in Ndjamena.

"The defence and security chiefs who met with the President and Vice-President Yemi Osinbajo for over three-and-a-half hours, also briefed them on the refurbishment of existing military platforms and the acquisition of new weapons for the Armed Forces."

Ismaila also told the State House correspondents that the service chiefs left the meeting happier because the President updated and enriched their strategic plans.

The Permanent Secretary explained that the meeting also discussed the movement of the Army command centre to the North-East.

He said the security chiefs, after briefing the President on how far they had gone in the anti-Boko Haram war, were given additional assignments.

Ismaila assured Nigerians that "with what we have come out with from this meeting, we are very enthusiastic that the issue of Boko Haram will soon be over."

He said he was sure there would be a difference in the insurgency war with the common front that has been formed by Nigeria, Chad, Cameroon, Benin and Niger.

"We have all strategised and we are coming out with one type of strategy that we are going to address the Boko Haram with, unlike before," he added.

The Permanent Secretary said the issue of sacking of service chiefs did not come up during the meeting.

On the absence of heads of some security agencies at the meeting, Ismaila said, "This is not a national security meeting; this is a briefing meeting by the Ministry of Defence on the operationalisation of the Multi-National Joint Task Force and the relocation of the command control centre to the North -East, so it is something restricted to the Ministry of Defence."

Meanwhile, two suicide female bombers wreaked havoc on the popular Fish Market on Baga Road at about 3.45pm.

A member of the youth vigilante group, Modu Ibrahim, told one of our correspondents that "the suicide bombers found their way into the market during the second afternoon prayer when most people were in groups to pray."

"They detonated the bombs tied to their bodies few meters apart," he added.

According to Ibrahim, "apart from the two suicide bombers, 11 other persons were blown apart and 10 others severely injured."

A resident of the troubled city, Jack Vince, said that the injured were taken to the state's Specialist Hospital.

"One of the female suicide bombers detonated an Improvised Explosive Device strapped to her body, killing herself in the process. Also, a lady was said to have been apprehended earlier with what was suspected to be IED in her possession," he added.

The market had in the past been attacked by insurgents.

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