

Borno: Driver killed, six missing as ISWAP attacks aid workers

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Suspected members of the Islamic State of West Africa Province on Thursday attacked a convoy of aid workers in Borno State, killing one person and abducting six others in an ambush in Damasak.

A statement by the Country Director of Action Against Hunger, Shashwat Saraf, said, “One of the drivers was killed, while one Action Against Hunger staff member, two of the drivers and three health workers are missing.

“We are deeply saddened by this tragic incident as these are colleagues dedicated to providing life-saving assistance to individuals and families affected by the ongoing humanitarian crisis in the North-East.

“We are very concerned and want to ensure that they are safe and can be reunited with their families.”

He added, “Action Against Hunger strives to ensure that millions of people in need of humanitarian assistance in North-East receive the essential services required for their survival, especially women and children.

“We express our deepest condolences to the family of our driver and we extend our support to the family of our missing colleagues as well as others affected by this incident.”

The three-vehicle convoy was returning to Damasak from Layi village where the ACF runs a clinic when gunmen opened fire, AFP reports, citing a humanitarian source who spoke on condition of anonymity.

One of the vehicles veered off the road and crashed into a tree, killing the driver.

“The four were stuck in the vehicle and seized by the attackers,” the humanitarian source said.

“The occupants in the other vehicles abandoned their vehicles and fled on foot to Damasak, eight kilometres away,” the source added.

In a statement, the United Nations Humanitarian Coordinator in Nigeria, Edward Kallon, condemned the attack.

He said, “I am deeply disturbed by reports of an incident involving aid workers from International NGOs in northern Borno State. As details are still coming in and information has yet to be confirmed, the humanitarian community in Nigeria is concerned about the safety of our ACF colleague, partners and contractors involved in the attack against an aid convoy reported on July 18 on Gubio-Damasak road.”

Kallon added, “These acts of violence affect the very individuals, families and communities that we support, and deprive vulnerable people of vital services.”

Meanwhile, the ISWAP fighters, a faction of the Boko Haram group, attacked the Nigerian military Forward Operating Base, Jakana, Borno State in seven gun trucks, the Nigerian Army said on Friday.

The Chief of the Army Staff, Lt.-Gen Tukur Buratai, the army also stated, had commiserated with the families of a colonel, a captain and three other soldiers who were killed during the ISWAP invasion, saying, “The sacrifices of the fallen heroes in the ongoing fight against terrorism will further spur us to do more.”

The army said on Friday that despite the killing of five officers and soldiers, the troops of 212 Battalion were able to recover one gun truck, two AK-47 rifles and other arms.

Our correspondent had reported on Friday that the ISWAP and Boko Haram fighters struck on Maiduguri-Damaturu Road near Jakana community in Borno State, on Wednesday evening, shooting dead a colonel, a captain, four soldiers and a villager.

The terrorists at about 6.30pm had waylaid some commercial vehicles along the road near a military checkpoint and used the vehicles as a cover to open fire on the soldiers.

The Deputy Director, Public Relations, Operation Lafiya Dole, Col. Ado Isa, who confirmed the deaths in a statement in Maiduguri, Borno State, noted that the colonel, the captain and the three soldiers, whose names were not revealed, were in transit from Maiduguri to Damaturu, ran into the terrorists’ ambush which led to their death.

He said, “Troops of 212 Battalion deployed at Forward Operating Base, Jakana, neutralised an unconfirmed number of Boko Haram and ISWAP terrorists when they attempted to infiltrate their base in dire need for logistics.

“The terrorists came at about 6.45pm in seven gun trucks and fought fiercely to infiltrate the camp but the attack was thwarted with heavy fire and bombardment by patriotic troops.

“The following items were captured: one anti-aircraft gun, two rocket-propelled grenades, two AK-47 rifles, 15 machine gun rounds and 12 AK-47 rounds. Sadly, a colonel and a captain as well as three soldiers on transit from Maiduguri to Damaturu ran into an ambush which led to their unfortunate death.”

The army chief, Buratai, while commiserating with the families of the fallen soldiers, said, “Personnel of the army will never be deterred in the ongoing noble and patriotic fight against terrorism and insurgency in the North-East.

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