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Gunmen kidnap German in Adamawa

Posted By [pmnews](#) On July 16, 2014 @ 11:24 pm In [Metro,News,Today's Headlines](#) | [3 Comments](#)



Gunmen on motorcycles kidnapped a German national on Wednesday in Adamawa state, police said, in the latest assault in the region repeatedly assailed by Boko Haram.

"Security agents are working assiduously to track down the kidnapers and free the hostage," Adamawa state police spokesman Othman Abubakar said of the early morning abduction in the town of Gombi.

Abubakar confirmed the victim's nationality. A German foreign ministry spokesman told AFP he "was aware of the case" but declined to comment further.

Residents in Gombi, roughly 100 kilometres (62 miles) from Yola — Adamawa's capital, described the hostage as a teacher at a government-run technical training centre.

They said a small group of gunmen approached as he left his home in the Anguwan Faransa (French quarters) neighbourhood. They drew their guns and signalled for their dozen accomplices to swarm before carting the German away on a motorcycle.

"As soon as he came out of his house and was about to enter his car to go to work, two of them walked up to him and pointed a gun," said Yakubu Jauro, who lives in the area.

David Adamu, another nearby resident, said more than a dozen blankets had been found outside the victim's house.

"We believe they were abandoned by the kidnapers who must have passed the night there lying in wait for their captive," he said.

While there was no immediate claim of responsibility, initial blame will likely fall on Boko Haram, which has led a five-year insurgency aimed at creating a hardline Islamic state in the Muslim-majority north of Nigeria.

Boko Haram, which loosely translates as "Western education is forbidden", opposes schools that teach a so-called Western curriculum and has launched previous attacks on teachers and students.

- Ransom kidnappings -

Analysts say the Islamists have also increasingly sought to fund their insurgency through ransom kidnappings, targeting primarily wealthy Nigerians, but also foreigners.

The 2013 abduction and subsequent release of a French family of seven, including four children, across Nigeria's northeastern border in Cameroon is believed to have netted Boko Haram a

ransom payment of several million dollars.

An offshoot of Boko Haram, known as Ansaru, has also claimed the kidnapping of at least eight foreigners in northern Nigeria since 2012, but the group has been largely dormant for more than a year.

Ansaru claimed the December 2012 abduction of French engineer Francis Collump from Katsina state. He escaped in November of last year.

The group, which reportedly broke with Boko Haram to specifically target foreigners instead of Nigerians, executed seven expatriates it seized from Bauchi state in 2013.

In January 2012, German engineer Edgar Raupach was kidnapped by Boko Haram at a construction site on the outskirts of the northern city of Kano.

He was killed in a military raid on a Boko Haram hideout on the outskirts of the city four months later.

Ransom kidnappings primarily targeting oil workers in the southern crude producing Niger Delta region are common, but those are considered a different phenomenon to the Islamist attacks in the north.

More than 10,000 people are estimated to have been killed in Boko Haram's rebellion.

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