

Top stories

From TIMOTHY OLANREWAJU, Maiduguri

Malam Musa Yakubu, father of one of the slain members of the youth vigilance group popularly called *Civilian JTF* in Borno State wished his eldest son, Mohammadu Yakubu, was alive to tell the family the heroic story of how the unarmed youths smoked out the dreaded Boko Haram insurgents from their hideouts in Maiduguri and environs, but fate denied him that opportunity.

Last weekend, the 25-year-old Mohammadu, a vibrant member of the volunteer vigilance group was shot dead with five others during a counter-insurgency operation at Mainok, a small community along Maiduguri-Damaturu highway in Kaga Local Government Area of Borno State.

The group had gone to the town in the afternoon of Friday, July 26 in a convoy of about 30 vehicles to smash what was believed to be an emerging Boko Haram camp in the area and arrest suspected members of the sect especially following a report of the kidnap of a senior staffer of a popular food and beverages company on the highway a week earlier by the sect.

The operation, however, went awry as an informant reportedly hinted the insurgents in a nearby bush ahead of the offensive. Boko Haram men subsequently ambushed the youths, killing no fewer than five volunteers. The bustling Ajilari, Gomari and Bulunkutu Kasuwa areas of the metropolis where some of the slain volunteer youths lived, were still in mourning mood when *Sunday Sun* visited on Wednesday. Mohammadu's father, Malam Musa Yakubu wept profusely as he sat on a big mat in front of his house at Gomari, recalling his last encounter with his son whom he described as the breadwinner of the family.

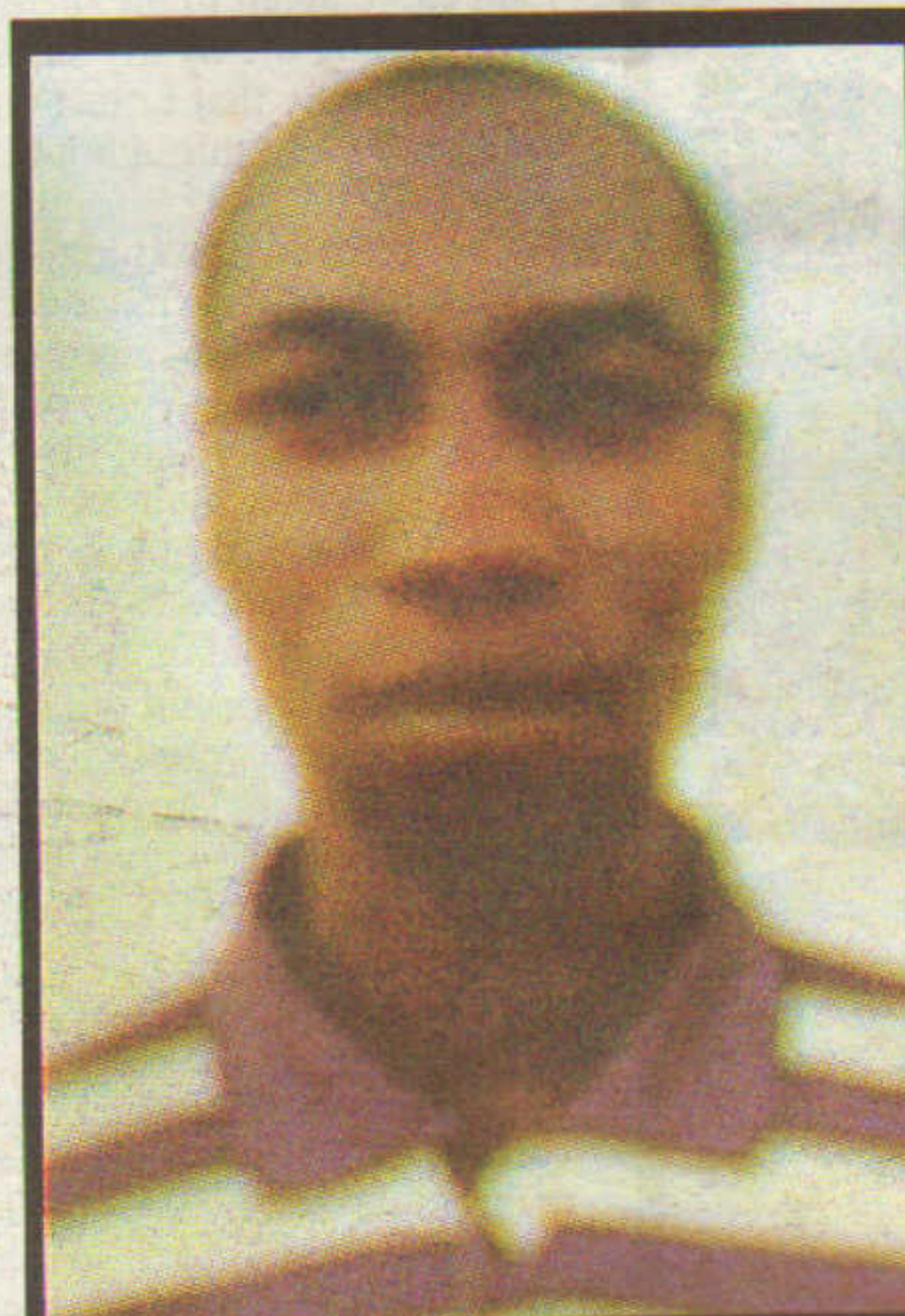
"He was hesitant to leave home that day (Friday) for the operation, because he had been out the previous day and he came back to tell us how eight Boko Haram members with guns were arrested by them at different locations within the city. I listened to his account in amazement. How were they doing it, I usually asked and he replied "it was Allah". He always asked me "is there any other person or power that is superior to Allah?" and I often replied him no. I loved his courage and I do pray for him. I was expecting him to return on that Friday and

Boko Haram attack

My son died a martyr

-Father of slain *Civilian JTF* member

- Says he doesn't regret allowing him join fight against sect



• Mohammadu, slain civilian JTF member



• Malam Yakubu, father of the slain civilian JTF member.

tell us another account of their efforts but I only saw his corpse," he punctuated his story with tears and after much condolence from this reporter, he continued, adding "Initially, he didn't want to follow his colleagues but they kept encouraging him, telling him they were doing the work of God to help people against the dreaded Boko Haram. It was then he came out of the house and saw many of his colleagues already waiting outside. So, he

came in again and told us he had made up his mind to follow them. Surprisingly, he asked for forgiveness from everybody after which he prayed and left the house," the frail-looking father of the deceased said amidst tears.

He told our reporter that the sad news of his son's sudden death aggravated his poor health. "I've been sick before but the tragedy aggravated my ill-health," the septuagenarian said. Despite the huge burden his son's death

placed on the family's economic survival, Yakubu said the young man died a martyr, adding that he would not hesitate to allow his two other sons-both 20years old and 15 years old respectively- to join the movement for the liberation of the people of the state from the grip of Boko Haram insurgents.

"I don't regret that I allowed him to join the *Civilian JTF*. I know he died a martyr, because he was out to save more lives. Many lives have been lost here and he felt there was the need to put a stop to it. Definitely, some people must stand up when a situation becomes very bad in any society and that was what my son and his colleagues did. I have no regrets. He did God's work and I believe God will receive him", he said.

But his greatest concern was the failure of the Joint Task Force (JTF) and Borno State government to visit him and sympathize with his family. "Do you know neither a government representative nor the JTF has paid a condolence visit to us despite the fact that my son died a patriot?" he asked rhetorically. Suddenly, he began to mutter some incomprehensible words, looked into the sky as if expecting something, and then yelled; "Ye Allah" waving at the two children, presumably his grandchildren, who were attempting to play with him, to be calm and sit on the mat. It was indeed a sad, depressing moment for the man.

Family sources said the late Mohammadu known by his peers as Danlami Zungu could not proceed with his education after his primary education because of financial constraints. He was engaged in menial jobs until about two years ago when he took to taxi driving.

// couldn't get married because of my charms!