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Terrorists kill 21 in Bauchi, Borno attacks

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BY TIMOTHY OLANREWAJU, MAIDUGURI AND PAUL ORUDE, BAUCHI ON JULY 2, 2014 ·

COVER

•50 houses torched as B'Haram bombs Civilian JTF volunteers

•Another blast rocks Kaduna

Maiduguri, Borno State capital was shut down yesterday when Boko Haram insurgents bombed a popular market, killing 20 people, 69 other residents were injured. There were conflicting figures of dead victims. **This is even as gunmen returned to Bauchi yesterday, killing a resident and torching 50 houses.**

Also, last night, the fragile peace of Kaduna was shattered, with an explosion in the city. In the blast, many people were feared dead while a handful of others were injured.

Sources revealed that in the Kaduna blast, which occurred around the Asikolaye/Bakin Ruwa area, on the Kaduna Western by-pass, buildings were destroyed.

Although details of the blast were still sketchy at press time, a senior security official confirmed it.

In Maiduguri, a driver of a Peugeot salon car had engaged a tricyclist (Keke NAPEP) in hot argument over traffic violation along Ahmadu Bello Way near Maiduguri Monday Market. "They were arguing over who was right or wrong. I think the driver of the car damaged the side mirror of the Keke NAPEP and some Civilian JTF men came to the scene to intervene. Immediately, the bomb went off from the car, killing many people including the Civilian JTF volunteers," Auwalu Ibrahim, a trader in the market told Daily Sun at the scene. The incident occurred at about 8.10am

The Commissioner of Police, Lawan Tanko, who was also at the scene to brief Governor Kashim Shettima, said the car, laden with charcoal, was loaded with Improvised Explosive Devices (IEDs). "The blast occurred when the IEDs hidden in the charcoal went off, thereby creating a crater in the middle of the road, many died," he said, even as he did not disclose how many people were killed.

The chairman of Civilian JTF in Sector 3, Illiya Saidu, told the governor that 17 bodies were recovered from the scene, adding that 15 of the victims were members of his group, who had accosted the suicide bomber. The Medical Director of Specialist Hospital, Maiduguri, Dr Laraba Bello, said 18 injured people were admitted as the remaining ones were taken to other hospitals because the facilities were overstretched.

At the Accident and Emergency Unit of the Umaru Shehu Hospital, medical attendants said 16 injured

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persons were admitted including 14 men and two women. Many of the victims were badly injured with severe burns. One of the victims, Babangida Tasri told Daily Sun on his hospital bed that he was caught in the blast enroute his working place. "I was going to my working place at about 8am when the explosion occurred. I was inside a taxi with the driver, who I believed may have died," he disclosed.

Another victim, Ajid Jidda, said he was going to his shop on Bag Road. "I just disembarked from a car near the scene trekking towards the Post Office when the bomb exploded," he said. Many families of the injured were seen crying, asking hospital attendants and nurses if their beloved would survive the injuries described by Gov Shettima as devastating and condemnable.

Shettima said the bombing of innocent residents was condemnable, adding that the attacks would not deter the government from providing basic needs for the people. "We will not stop providing services to our people despite Boko Haram insurgency," he said. The governor announced N1 million compensation to every member of Civilian JTF who died in the attack. He said the blast could have been more devastating had the volunteers not intercepted the bomber near the market.

However, the Civilian JTF Secretary-General, Tijjani Abba, told journalists that more than 40 people might have died. He said 21 bodies were evacuated from the scene shortly after the attack while another 20 charred bodies were also recovered. The blast destroyed some parts of the market and about 11 vehicles, mostly taxis parked opposite the scene. Residents said they had anticipated the Boko Haram insurgents might be planning bomb attacks in the metropolis, adding that the incident only confirmed their apprehension. They also said the casualties figure may be higher due to the severity of the injuries of the victims.

Meanwhile, one person was killed and several others were injured when gunmen attacked and burnt houses at Nahuta and Bigi outskirts of Bauchi, yesterday. The attackers came in the early hours of the day when the residents were asleep.

A villager from Nahuta, who pleaded anonymity, said they rode on four motor-cycles, each carrying passengers to disguise, as commercial motorcyclists, cluthing sophisticated weapons, machettes and guns.

One resident, Mr. Yake, was killed while his brother was injured. The attackers were said to have locked their parents out of their thatched house before setting the entire house on fire. The attackers shot sporadically before setting fire on about 50 houses in the area.

Residents lost their belongings to the fire, especially grains. Goats and other domestic animals were not spared. A widow, Mrs. Maryamu John, was in tears in company of sympathizers in front of their burnt house with several women and children wailing.

Leader of the burnt Catholic church, Mr. Markus Thomas, said the attackers arrived at the church premises when the choir was practising songs and had to flee for safety before the hoodlums set fire on the building and left for Bigi settlement.

He lamented that the attack was targeted at the Christian community in the state, saying government should provide adequate security for Christians while soliciting for relief materials.

He said policemen have deposited Mr. Yake's body at the Abubakar Tafawa-Balewa Teaching Hospital mortuary in Bauchi.

The Chairman, state's Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN), Rev. Lawi Pokti, described it as barbaric and inhuman the escalating attacks on Christian communities in the state. He urged the government to intervene.

Police command's spokesman, DSP Haruna Mohammed, confirmed the incident, saying details of the attacks would be released.

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