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Boko Haram attacks Borno Gov's hometown

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BY OUR REPORTER ON OCTOBER 8, 2015

COVER

- Releases new video, denies surrendering
- Soldiers kill over 100, seize weapons

From **Molly Kilete**, Kemi Yesufu, Abuja, **Emma Emeazor**, **Peter Agoh**, Lagos, **Timothy Olanrewaju**, Maiduguri and **Tony John**, Port Harcourt

INSURGENCY and terror berthed at the doorsteps of Yobe State Governor, Ibrahim Geidam on Wednesday.

Members of the Islamist sect landed in the governor's hometown in seven pick-up vans and engaged in ceaseless shootings which lasted several hours.

Police Public Relations Officer in the state, ASP Toyin Gbadegesin confirmed the attack but assured that "security forces are on ground and are well in control of the situation."

This is even as the war to rout Boko Haram recorded a major breakthrough with soldiers on internal security operations in the state killing no fewer than 100 members of the sect in a shootout.


Several arms and ammunition belonging to the insurgents were also seized by the soldiers drawn from the 120 Task Force Battalion, at Goniri, in Yobe State.

However, seven soldiers died while one officer and eight soldiers sustained injuries in the operation.

In another operation, no fewer than seven suspected insurgent were killed in Gubio town about 85 kilometre north of Maiduguri, Borno State by government forces.


Arms and equipment seized from the sect included one general purpose machine gun (GPMG), two rocket propelled grenades, nine AK-47 rifles, belted rounds of 7.62 (NATO) ammunition various wires used for Improvised Explosive Devices (IEDs), seven primed IEDs, different kinds of spanners and one torchlight.

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Acting director, Army Public Relations, Colonel Sani Usman, said the terrorists who are trying to claim relevance on Wednesday, attacked troops from 120 Task Force Battalion, at Goniri, in Yobe, but met with stiff resistance from the troops who engaged them in a fierce battle that left over 100 of them dead.

Usman, in the statement said soldiers have consolidated on the encounter and were more determined to defend their location and continue to serve as blocking force to any fleeing terrorists from the Nigerian Air Force aerial bombardments and other troops artillery fire.

The Army spokesman in the statement further stated that soldiers from 21, Brigade, destroyed Boko Haram terrorists camps along Bama and Ngurosoye axis.

He said the soldiers while on patrol of the area came across some of the terrorists hideouts that also served as fabricating area for IEDs and training camps, adding that another patrol team also discovered and exhumed IEDs and wires for detonation along Bama-Kawuri road.

He reaffirmed the determination of the Nigerian security agencies to defeat and flush out the terrorists from Nigerian soil.

In another development, the Army announced the arrest of three more suspected Boko Haram collaborators in Hausari ward in Maiduguri.

The arrest conducted by troops from the 21 Brigade, was part of a follow-up to the recent capture of one of the terrorists' financiers in Bama.

According to the statement, the arrested terrorist has been providing the military with useful information. It added that the arrested collaborators of the insurgents are currently being interrogated.

While noting that it has identified all hideouts of the insurgents and was determined to dismantle them, the Army warned terrorists yet to renounce their membership of the sect to do so and embrace peace. It also appealed to the parents, families and friends of all those involved in Boko Haram insurgency to persuade them to desist and renounce their membership of the terrorist group.

However, Boko Haram yesterday released a new video in which it denied surrendering to government forces, reaffirmed allegiance to Islamic State and claimed it has not been subdued by the military's offensive.

The footage showed an unidentified man reaffirming the allegiance with Islamic State (Isis) and its leader, Abu Bakr al- Baghdadi. The man, who spoke in Hausa and in Arabic, denied the militants are surrendering to government forces, contrary to what the military had claimed.

The militant also denied troops freed women and children kidnapped by the terrorists, known for abducting civilians and forcing them to carry out suicide bombings, according to the BBC.

In the video, Boko Haram suggested that it still has scores of fighters, and it is highly unlikely to surrender or enter into dialogue with the government anytime soon, the BBC reported.

In what appeared like desperation to hit at soft targets, a suspected Boko Haram bomber reportedly threw explosive devices at a sparsely crowded Fulani settlement located at the outskirts of Damaturu, Yobe State capital in the early hours of yesterday, killing a university undergraduate and 17 others.

Residents said the second and third blasts occurred at Mohammadu Buhari Estate in the capital at about 6am when two suicide bombers arrived the area in a tricycle. They were said to have disembarked and headed to their targets-mainly a commercial hub of the estate. A young man, an undergraduate of Yobe State University, Damaturu who first suspected the unusual movement of one of the bombers, attempted to apprehend him and in the process, the bomb exploded, killing the undergraduate and some other residents nearby, father of the deceased undergraduate, Mohammed Damagun told journalists in Damaturu.

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Alhaji Musa Jidawa, Executive Secretary, Yobe State Emergency Management Agency (SEMA), earlier confirmed 16 people died and 10 injured, adding that those injured have been taken to the state Specialists Hospital in the capital.

Police Public Relations Officer (PPRO), Toyin Gbadegesin said the death toll has risen to 18. He said bodies of the deceased have been deposited in the mortuary for families and relations to claim the corpses. He also said those injured were receiving treatment at the Sani Abatcha Specialists Hospital.

Meanwhile, Chief of Defence Staff, General Abayomi Olonisakin, said the Military has restrategised to dislodge the sect.

He gave the assurance in Port Harcourt, Rivers State, while on a tour to assess the military operational facilities and the readiness to combat terrorism and insurgency.

"The essence of our visit to Port Harcourt is to look at the operational readiness and preparedness of the troops and to see how we can enhance their performances," he said.

General Olonisakin, who was accompanied by the Chief of the Air Staff, Air Marshal Sadique Abubakar and other security chiefs, said the military had been working hard to ensure that the December deadline by President Muhammadu Buhari to eradicate terrorism was achieved.

The CDS and his entourage assessed some warplanes at the 97 Special Operations Group of the Nigerian Air Force, Port Harcourt, as well as the officers and men of the Nigerian Army, Air Force and Navy during the joint Military Parade at the Air Force Base.

Member representing Ilaje/ Ese-Odo Federal Constituency, Hon. Victor Akinjo, has described Federal Government's approach to fighting insurgency as inadequate.

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