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Col's killing, an eye opener – Buratai

— 8th November 2016

2 more soldiers killed

From Fred Itua, Abuja and Timothy Olanrewaju, Maiduguri

Seventy-two hours after Lt-Col. Mohammed Abu-Ali was killed in an ambush by Boko Haram in Borno State, the Chief of Army Staff (COAS), Lt. General Yusuf Buratai, has called for a close scrutiny of utterances of individuals and organizations in the country. The late Commander was buried yesterday. This is even as the insurgents killed another two soldiers in a village, 10 kilometres from Chibok.

The COAS, who made the remarks yesterday when he appeared before the Senate Committee on the Federal Capital Territory (FCT) to defend the acquisition of disputed lands in the territory by the Army, said the death of the gallant officer "will be an eye opener."

Although he did not give further details, he said some responses and utterances by highly-placed individuals in the country were posing serious threats to national security.

He said one officer, six soldiers and one rating were killed in the ambush. Buratai's statement contradicts an earlier insinuation that only four soldiers, including Colonel Abu-Ali were killed in the ambush.

"The fight against Boko Haram is a matter of concern to us. What we are going to witness today will be an eye opener. Although we have had cases of officers killed, this time calls for closer scrutiny of responses by individuals and organizations to national security.

"We must take the issue of security seriously. That is the only way we can take the issue of bringing this insurgency to a close. We need the support of the Senate. We will not remain in this condition. We need to improve on our facilities.

"We need to relocate the headquarters of the current military office. The current location is not so convenient for us," he said.

Buratai, while mourning the death of the fallen soldiers, vowed that the Army will continue to defend the territorial integrity of the country against internal and external attacks.

Speaking on the disputed land located in Maitama District of Abuja, the Army Chief said the allocation of the plots to civilians was posing serious security threats to military formations in Abuja.

"The land under dispute is posing security threat. If the committee visits the place, they will understand what we are talking about threat. We are ready to submit ourselves to the civil authorities. The issue at hand about the land in Maitama, I want to concur with the Minister of FCT. We are talking and we will continue to talk until we arrive at a decision," he said.

Earlier the FCT Minister, Muhammad Bello, told the Senate committee that his team was already meeting with Army establishment to find a peaceful resolution of the issue.

"If this committee gives us enough time, these are issues we can resolve. At the highest level, we will sit down and discuss on how to accommodate the interest of everyone. We have been discussing. We are all part of one government and our desire is to meet the yearnings of all Nigerians.

Chairman of the committee, Senator Dino Melaye, told the minister to ensure that residents who have already made payments were adequately compensated.

Meanwhile, Boko Haram insurgents have raided a remote community near Chibok in the southern part of Borno where over 200 schoolgirls were abducted two years ago.

Sources said the terrorists raided Akwada Kautikri, about 10 kilometres to Chibok on Saturday night, but the incident was not reported in Maiduguri until yesterday morning.

He stated: "We are representatives of the people. Some of the people given lands there are former military officers. I want to ask the minister whether or not those who have made payments for land allocations will not lose anything they have invested. We need this assurance."

"Soldiers initially thought they were vigilante men until they entered the village and set fire on houses. It was then the soldiers started pursuing them and confronted them. Two of the soldiers died in the battle while Boko Haram men killed were immediately taken away by their colleagues," Maina Chibok, a resident told Daily Sun.

He said one soldier was also wounded in the attack.

He also disclosed that soldiers, vigilante and Civilian JTF members chased the insurgents into the bush shortly after the attack which occurred same day the military rescued another Chibok girl, Maryam Maiyanga with her month old baby at Pulka in Gwoza Local Government, bringing the total of girls now freed to 23.

Boko Haram has stepped up attacks in Borno in recent times, targeting troops particularly along the Lake Chad and southern Borno in communities bordering Sambisa, the insurgents' major operational base.

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