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Boko Haram kills 2 in Borno

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• Minister declares group 'completely destroyed'

• Why attacks persist, by Shettima

Magnus Eze; Timothy Olanrewaju; Maiduguri, with agency report

Boko Haram fighters stormed a village in Borno State and killed two people, a local resident and a security source, yesterday, just as the military and the Minister of Interior, Abdulrahman Dambazzau, maintained the insurgents have been completely defeated.

The attack happened on Sunday evening at Alau-Kofa village, some 12 kilometres from Maiduguri.

"Boko Haram came to our village last night (Sunday), at about 8:00pm, firing guns and RPGs (rocket-propelled grenades). Two people were burnt alive and the whole village was burnt, along with our food," Bulama Bukar, who lives in Alau-Kofa, told AFP.

Bukar, whose father was shot in the leg during the attack, said the insurgents "specifically came to steal our cattle" but were forced to abandon the herd when soldiers arrived. Last Wednesday they attacked the village, killed three people and took away 50 cattle. And now, they came back," he added.

Meanwhile, at least 30,000 hostages kidnapped by Boko Haram have been freed by soldiers, Defence Minister, Mansur Dan-Ali, has said.

Dan-Ali stated this in Maiduguri at a Special Town Hall meeting organised for the military and security agencies, yesterday, in company with his Information and Culture and Interior counterparts, Alhaji Lai Mohammed and Dambazzau, respectively.

The retired brigadier general also reiterated the Federal Government's commitment to promoting the welfare of soldiers battling insurgency.

On his part, Dambazzau, said Boko Haram has been completely decimated, its structure degraded and its leadership dismantled.

Earlier, Mohammed, said the resumption of flights, bubbling nightlife, and football matches in Maiduguri are signs that normalcy has returned to the Borno capital.

"No airline was flying this route at the height of the insurgency. In any case, the airport was not even open for such flights due to safety and security concerns.

"The mere fact that we are gathered here for this meeting is a testimony to the success that has been recorded in fighting the insurgency.

"In the heat of the insurgency, this would have been impossible," Mohammed said.

The minister said his Special Assistants, who flew into Maiduguri last Saturday, told him of how they were pleasantly surprised to see a city in sharp contrast to what was being painted out there.

In his address at the town hall meeting, Mohammed, stated that the meeting was convened to let the world appreciate efforts of federal and state governments in returning normalcy to the region. He said following the current progress made in counter terrorism, the level of attacks, even in Abuja, had been reduced drastically.

"We have come a long way from those days, when Boko Haram could strike at a place and time of their own choosing, when Boko Haram conquered and administered territories. That time, not even Abuja, the heartland of the nation, was safe from the insurgents' attacks. Today, Boko Haram is no longer capable of carrying out coordinated attacks anywhere. All they do now is to engage in cowardly attacks on soft targets. That, in itself, is a sign of weakness.

"Let's be clear, we didn't get to where we are today by accident. Our gallant men and women in uniform have made all the sacrifices, including the supreme sacrifice, to bring us here. Our political and military leaders have shown leadership in getting us here, unlike in the past when, in the words of Mr. President, official bungling, negligence, complacency or collusion made Boko Haram a terrifying force. The ordinary folks have also shown great resilience and support to bring us here. We are eternally grateful to all"

Meanwhile, Borno State Governor, Kashim Shettima has explained why there were renewed attacks by the Boko Haram insurgents in the North East.

The governor categorically accused the immediate past theatre commander of Operation Lafiya Dole, Major General Ibrahim Attahiru of 'incompetence.'

He said what could not be achieved by a northern army officer has been done by his successor, Major Gen. Nicholas Rogers; an officer from the South East.

The governor specifically pointed out that the successes recorded by the military in the last few weeks could not be realised in three years.

Shettima, who spoke at the Special Town Hall Meeting for the Military and Security Agencies, organised by the Ministry of Information and Culture, on the security situation in the North East, in Maiduguri, yesterday, said security forces had sufficiently degraded insurgency in the region.

"I want to salute the Nigerian armed forces for gallantly fighting insurgency and decimating it. Four years ago, the people of the north eastern states, Borno in particular, faced threats, 20 out of 27 local governments in Borno were under the occupation of Boko Haram, and nobody could venture out of Maiduguri beyond 10 kilometres, you were in Boko Haram territory. I want to sincerely thank the federal government led by President Muhammadu Buhari for the accomplishment in the security of the northeastern zone, what the Nigerian military was able to accomplish in the past couple of weeks in the Sambisa forest, accomplishment that we did not experience in the past two years."

The governor, however, said in the last three years, the local governments that were formerly under Boko Haram control were liberated also revealed that the "suicide bombing is not a sign of strength but weakness."

He, however, urged government to give the Nigerian Army all the needed support especially this dry season as, according to him, Sambisa would become inaccessible during the rainy season and give the insurgents time to re-group.


Meanwhile, a Senator representing Borno North and chairman, Committee on Defence, Abubakar Kyari, disclosed a local government in his senatorial district has not been totally liberated from Boko Haram.

"Marte has not been totally liberated," he declared and urged the military to step up its efforts to clear the remnants of Boko Haram..."

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