

Controversy trails Boko Haram's invasion of Maiduguri

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- Troops abandoned their post, Residents allege
- It's not true –Military

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Facts have emerged on how Boko Haram in a group of vehicles including cars and motorcycles invaded Maiduguri, Borno's capital on Thursday evening in nearly two hours attack that created panic and pandemonium in the city.

Residents of Jiddari-Polo and Jitimari, a sprawling area at the edge of the city told *Saturday Sun* the insurgents beat military post to enter the city and fire heavy guns at 5:15pm. "We saw them coming in vehicles and motorcycles at about 5:15pm. They fired some shots though we thought the sound was coming from bomb explosion. Then, many other shots followed and people were fleeing," Mohammed Dawood, a resident disclosed.

Scores of people fled their homes on Thursday as the city was again thrown into confusion. Hundreds of residents were seen on the road looking for safe haven while car or vehicle owners moved their families in tens to other areas believed to be safe despite military assurances of safety.

The military in a statement said more troops have been deployed to the scene to push back the insurgents from proceeding into the city. The air component of the military operation also came to the rescue at 7pm.

As at Friday morning when *Saturday Sun* visited the area of the attack, many residents have started returning to their homes. Rescue and emergency workers were also seen evacuating corpses of the victims. Residents said the insurgents slaughtered a middle age man at a mosque by the road near the Federal High Court complex at Polo area. The blood-stained floor of the mosque was yet to be cleaned as at the time of the visit.

The casualty

Bashir Idris Garga, Northeast Zone Coordinator of the National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA) said nine people including five suicide bombers were killed. "Early in the morning, NEMA, SEMA, Civil Defence, Armed Forces and CJTF evacuated the corpses and we have brought them to the morgue. There are five suicide bombers who died while trying to detonate IEDs. There are innocent citizens, four of them that lost their lives. We have a total of nine persons that lost their lives in the attack," Garga disclosed.

He said the man who died at home as a result of panic and shock was not counted among the victims since his corpse was not found at the scene of the attack.

An unexploded bomb dropped by the military fighter jet was also seen near Jitimari IDPs camp in the area even as security agencies were making efforts to cordon off the area. A charred vehicle and mangled body of a suspected Boko Haram driver was also found near the unexploded bomb. Security sources said the unexploded bomb was dropped during airstrike to repel the insurgents' invasion of the city.

Police Public Relations Officer, Edet Okon said a police Armored Personnel Carrier (APC) was damaged by the Boko Haram explosions. He said two CJTF members were also killed in gun battle with the insurgents. He said normalcy has returned to the troubled area.

Residents blame military

Meanwhile, residents have blamed military troops in the area for allegedly abandoning their post when the insurgents arrived. "They left their trenches and fled when Boko Haram came in cars and other vehicles. This gave Boko Haram the courage to move into the city," a resident and civil servant who preferred anonymity for fear of losing his job told *Saturday Sun*. Many residents in the area also corroborated the claim but the military said the allegation was unfounded.

"It is not true, the allegation is not correct and it is unfounded. Why should people who ought to be commending troops that gallantly foiled the terrorists attack now claim we abandoned our post and fled? It is unfair," Theatre Commander, Operation Lafiya Dole said. He said on the contrary, the residents ought to alert the military as soon as they sighted insurgent's vehicles rather than waiting for the insurgents to strike. He urged people to collaborate with the military and security agencies to end insurgency in the area.