

# 31 killed as suicide bombers strike Borno

• 42 injured, troop destroy Boko Haram camp in Sambisa • Bandits attack Taraba villages, burn houses

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**Timothy Olanrewaju**, Maiduguri, **Molly Kilete**, Abuja and **Sylvanus Viashima**, Jalingo

**No fewer than 31 persons have been killed and 41 injured in multiple explosions at a Borno town late Sunday after three suicide bombers infiltrated a tea joint and commercial area.**

Two female and a male suicide bombers invaded a local tea joint and commercial area adjacent a cinema centre with explosives at Konduga, a community in the central part of Borno, some 37 kilometres to the state capital on Sunday night.

An official of the state Emergency Management Agency (SEMA) said the bombers detonated explosives at the scenes, killing at least 17 people. SEMA Director of Search and Rescue, Usman Kachalla, said the incident occurred at about 8pm on Sunday but the agency's rescue workers could not access the town until yesterday morning.

"At about 8pm on Sunday, there was a loud explosion at Konduga but we couldn't access the place in the night. This morning (Monday), we brought our men and I can confirm to you that about 30 people were killed," Kachalla told journalists at Konduga.

Some residents of Konduga who accompanied their wounded family members to the hospital said 19 people were buried yesterday morning, hours after the night blasts. They said 17 corpses were recovered from the scenes but more victims later died early yesterday morning due to "inadequate medical facilities to tackle the emergency."

Chief Medical Officer (CMO) of the state specialist hospital, Dr Labara Bello, said 41 victims of the explosions were brought from Konduga to the hospital in Maiduguri. She said one of the victims died on arrival at the hospital; three on referral at the University of Maiduguri Teaching Hospital (UMTH) while eight have been discharged, leaving the number of victims still in the hospital to 29.

The state governor, Babagana Zulum, in his first reaction to the incident during his visit to the victims at the hospital, described the attack as sad. He said the information given to him by the hospital CMO indicated that about 30 people died in the blasts. He confirmed that more people died hours after the incident.

“From the information provided by the chief medical officer of the hospital, about 30 people were killed, though he could not state the exact casualty figure. He directed the hospital management to give the victims special attention. He assured that he was already in talks with the security agencies to tackle recent security threats in the state.

Nobody has claimed responsibility, but it is believed the explosions were carried out by Boko Haram terrorist group because the blasts bear the mark of previous attacks by the insurgents.

However, the Nigerian Air Force (NAF) said its fighter jets engaged in the counter insurgency war has bombarded more terrorists’ locations at Sambisa Forest in Borno State.

NAF Director of Public Relations and Information, Air Commodore Ibikunle Daramola, said: “In continuation of its sustained air strikes against terrorists’ targets in Borno State, the Air Task Force (ATF) of Operation LAFIYA DOLE has severely degraded another Boko Haram Terrorists’ (BHTs) hideout in the Sambisa Forest.

“The operation was executed yesterday, June 16, 2019, after persistent Intelligence, Surveillance and Reconnaissance (ISR) missions revealed heavy presence of BHTs at a new camp, with several structures hidden under the thick foliage of the forest. Accordingly, the ATF dispatched an alpha jet to attack the location.

“Its bombs hit the target area, with devastating effects on several of the camouflaged structures, neutralising their BHT occupants.

“The NAF, operating in concert with surface forces, will sustain the effort to completely degrade the terrorists in the North East.”

Army confirms killing of soldier, two NSCDC operatives in Rivers State.

A soldier and two operatives of the Nigerian Security and Civil Defence Corps (NSCDC) were shot dead on Sunday, following a gun duel with suspected militants in Rivers State.

The security operatives were killed and their weapons carted away, while preventing militants from vandalizing an oil and gas facility in Gio community, Tai area of Rivers State.

The spokesman of the 6 Division of the Nigerian Army in Port Harcourt, Col. Aminu Iliyasu, confirmed the killings in a statement yesterday.

“The suspected militants attacked troops of 29 Battalion, 6 Division, with personnel of NSCDC in the early hours of Sunday.

“The team, which was guarding Shell Petroleum Development Company (SPDC) Trans National Pipelines (TNP) in Gio community, prevented the militants from vandalizing 24 and 28 of the TNP.

Iliyasu said the army later deployed more troops to the area with intent to apprehend the fleeing militants as well as other criminals in the community.

He said the cordon and search operation led to another gun duel with alleged cultists and an oil bunkering kingpin wanted by security agencies in the state.

The spokesman said Korobe Menele, a prime suspect in the killing of the security operatives, was shot dead in the gun duel with troops.

“At about 9 a.m. on Sunday, troops acting on reliable intelligence sighted a white Toyota Hilux that was without a number plate. The vehicle was hastily driven with four occupants.

“Efforts to stop the vehicle by troops at a check point were ignored. However, troops chased the speeding vehicle and caught up with it around Kira Junction, along Ken Saro-Wiwa Polytechnic.

“Sensing danger, the occupants opened fire at troops in a bid to escape. But, troops reacted and incapacitated the militants’ vehicle.

“Thereafter, they abandoned their vehicle and fled into the bush. However, one of the criminals was gunned down and was later identified as Korob Menele, a notorious cultist and oil bunkering kingpin,” he said.

Iliyasu said troops were currently on the trail of the three other fleeing suspects who had sustained gunshot injuries during the exchange of gunfire with soldiers.

He listed items recovered from the vehicle as one K2 rifle, two magazines with 52 rounds of 5.56mm, one number plate KKK 95DP Rivers, and some personal effects, including documents.

According to him, the body of the suspected cultist and recovered items had been handed over to NSCDC for further action.

In a related development, no fewer than one person has been confirmed dead and several property destroyed following Sunday night attacks on Tudiri and Wuroru villages at the suburb of Jalingo, the Taraba State capital by armed herdsmen.

The Spokesman of the state Police command, DSP David Misal, in a statement yesterday in Jalingo said no life was lost but some shops were looted, and that normalcy had returned to the troubled area following massive deployment of security personnel.

“At about 1800hrs on Sunday, heavily armed bandits on motorcycles invaded Tudiri village in Jauro Yinu ward, Ardo Kola LGA who set houses ablaze.

“The command immediately mobilised patrol teams to the area, but before their arrival the hoodlums had fled to the bush.

“No death was recorded and the situation is closely monitored by the security agencies in a bid to forestall any further breakdown of law and order, even as normalcy is returning to the area.”

However, Mr. Jerry Tidri, who witnessed the attack, said one person was killed at Wuroru village, while other persons are still missing.

Our correspondent reports that while normalcy is gradually returning to the state capital, some residents in the affected areas were seen moving their valuables to other parts of the town for fear of possible further attacks.

