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Three Killed as Boko Haram Attacks Borno Village Again

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Defence Hqs

- Presidency debunks plot to impose military govt on state

Jaiyeola Andrews with agency report

For the second time in one week, suspected members of the outlawed terrorist sect, Boko Haram, have attacked Izge, a village in Gwoza Local Government Area of Borno State, killing three persons.

The militants had earlier attacked the village on February 15 during which they killed about 106 people.

Although an initial report by Agence France Presse (AFP) said nobody was killed in the latest attack, which occurred at about 1am yesterday, another report by Associated Press (AP) said a man and two women were murdered in the attack.

The attack came hours before the presidency denied a report that it was planning to impose a military regime on Borno State.

It was learnt that gunmen returned to Izge, which is gradually coming back to life as residents started returning to the village after last week's attack, torching homes, shooting and setting off explosives. The attack forced the returned residents to flee again.

District head Bulama Agapu said he went back to Izge to persuade some elderly people to leave when the militants attacked Sunday.

He said they killed a man and two women, and used firebombs to raze thatched huts.

In another account of the attack, Chairman of Madagali Local Government Area in neighbouring Adamawa State, Mallam Maina Ularamu, told AFP that "nothing remains but burnt ruins."

Although Izge is in Borno State, its residents have closer ties with Madagali due to its proximity and ethnic allegiances.

There was no immediate comment from the Borno State police or the military when AFP contacted them.

Ularamu said one person was injured in the attack. Elderly residents who had stayed in the village had now also left, he added.

"The elderly who remained in the town, vowing not to leave their roots, had no option but to move to Madagali because the whole town has been burnt and everything looted," he said.

Some 10,000 residents from Izge and neighbouring villages fled to Madagali in the wake of last week's attack, heaping pressure on neighbouring towns and cities.

"We are facing a humanitarian situation in Madagali because the displaced persons are in dire need of basic supplies which we don't have the capacity to meet," Ularamu added.

The February 15 raid on village saw suspected Boko Haram fighters, who arrived in trucks and wearing military uniforms, going door-to-door looking for those hiding in their houses.

The attack, and others in the North-east blamed on the Islamist group over the last week, sparked condemnations from the United States and United Nations, among others.

Borno State Governor, Alhaji Kashim Shettima, even claimed the militants were better equipped than the military, prompting strong denials from the government.

Boko Haram has been waging a deadly insurgency in the North since 2009. The banned group, deemed an international terrorist organisation by Washington, wants to create an Islamic state.

Its activities pushed the federal government to impose a state of emergency on Borno, Adamawa and Yobe States in May last year.

The military offensive has pushed Boko Haram out of towns and cities but attacks continue in more remote, rural areas where the presence of troops is not strong.

Meanwhile, the presidency yesterday denied any plan by President Goodluck Jonathan to impose a military governor on the state.

It said the report was false, baseless, and should be disregarded..

It also said the report was a mischievous attempt in the media to project the federal government in bad light.

A national daily (not THISDAY) had alleged that the presidency had already penciled in a retired army general to be appointed the military administrator of the state. .

It said the move to suspend democratic structures in Borno State was recently revived following a similar attempt last May when the president first declared a state of emergency in the three states in the North-east.

But Special Adviser to the President on Media and Publicity, Dr. Reuben Abati, said the report was senseless.

According to him, the constitution has no provision for military rule in a civilian administration.

He explained that if there were any need to extend the state of emergency in Northern states, government would not hesitate to do so.

He said: "It (the said report) is preposterous; it does not make any sense. This is one of the states that government had declared a state of emergency twice, and on the two occasions, it did not remove the governors of the affected states.

"Nowhere does the constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria recommend military rule over civilian rule in a democratic setting like Nigeria. And this is a government that has consistently placed emphasis on strict adherence to the rule of law.

"If there is need to extend the state of emergency in the states that are currently observing it, government would do so and not to remove a democratically elected governor. To suggest that the federal government is trying to impose a military government in a democratic dispensation is far-fetched. Let it not be another mischievous attempt in the media to project government in a bad light."

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