

Army: How 13 soldiers died in two Boko Haram attacks

Hassan Jirgi and Emmanuel Onani

Days after suspected Boko Haram members launched a mass attack on a military base in Sasawa town, the army yesterday said 13 soldiers were killed, while 10 others were missing during the battles about 29 kilometres away from Damaturu, the Yobe State capital.

This is as the Nigerian Air Force (NAF) yesterday, said its fighter jets had bombed Boko Haram's targeted hideouts near Sambisa Forest, in continuation of its ongoing Operation Ruwan Wuta II.

Confirming the death of the soldiers, spokesman for the 3 Division of the Nigerian Army, Col. Kayode Ogunsanya, said: "The insurgents overran the military base having come with seven gun trucks, took the soldiers by surprise."

Though Ogunsanya could not confirm details of the casualty figure, a source, however, confirmed that Sasawa town was one of the communities that was under the insurgents' control before it was liberated by the Boko Haram, and had an established military base there due to the constant attack.

The source said there

● Air Force bombs Boko Haram locations near Sambisa forest

was casualty on both sides of the army and the insurgents.

One of the escaped soldiers, who spoke, said the Boko Haram sect stole a large cache of ammunition and food items from the military base.

Sources also confirmed that 13 service soldiers on battle were killed and eight still missing while many civilians lost their lives during the Tuesday attack.

One of the sources said: "There was still Boko Haram in the state. I believe most of them living inside the bush, anybody who said there's no Boko Haram in the state. It's a lie. Over

15 of us escaped the attack. Only few of us made it to state capital and other were missing, this imaging."

A resident of Sasawa town, Malam Mala Bukar, told our correspondent on the telephone, that the insurgents attacked and killed soldiers and civilians in the town, adding that many security forces have been killed because the insurgents laid siege for a long time.

Another resident added that, Boko Haram entered the town spending an hour killing soldiers and many civilians as well as destroyed building belong to government, shooting from no direction.

An eyewitness who escape to bush said that, Boko Haram parked miles away from the attacked town, in Six new barred of Hilux vans push them into the bush. I heard the Boko Haram started shooting from no direction before stole food.

Meanwhile, a statement by the Director of Public Relations and Information (DOPRI), Air Commodore Olatokunbo Adesanya, disclosed that the day and night operation, targeted Ghata Musa in Madagali, Borno State among other settlements.

"In continuation of Operation Ruwan Wuta II, the Nigerian Air Force (NAF) has continued to rain sig-

nificant fire on Boko Haram Terrorists (BHTs) locations, with intensive day and night aerial bombardments.

"On 24 Oct 17, the second day of the Operation, the NAF conducted an air interdiction mission on the BHT-infested settlement of Ghata Musa, located about 16km Northwest of Madgali. The location was observed to have significant BHT activities, indicative of its use as a hideout for the insurgents.

"The air interdiction was conducted by 5 aircraft namely 2 F-7Ni aircraft, armed with bombs and three Alpha Jet aircraft, armed with a combination of bombs, rockets and can-

nons. Two Alpha Jet aircraft and 2 F-Ni aircraft took turns to pound the location with bombs, destroying some structures and sending a few BHT survivors fleeing from the location.

"Thereafter, the third Alpha Jet Aircraft returned to strafe the location with rockets and cannons, neutralising some fleeing insurgents in the process," Adesanya said.

The DOPRI vowed that the suspected terrorist elements, will not be allowed to regroup anywhere in the country.

"On Day 3 of the Operation, the NAF conducted another air interdiction mission on a BHT structure in PARISU, which is the North-eastern gateway into the Sambisa Forest. The target building in PARISU was confirmed to be a BHT hideout and subsequently earmarked for attack. Four NAF aircraft namely 2 x F-7Ni aircraft, armed with bombs and 2 x Alpha Jet aircraft, armed with bombs and rockets, conducted the air interdiction.

"One Alpha Jet aircraft and the 2 x F-7Ni aircraft took turns to attack the location with bombs, thereby destroying the target structure. This was followed up with rockets and cannons' attack of the target area, by the second Alpha Jet aircraft, after which no terrorist movement was further observed at the location."

Agitation for restructuring good but... says Gowon

Dan Atori
MINNA

Former Head of State, General Yakubu Gowon, has called on agitators clamouring for the restructuring of Nigeria to do so without bitterness and acrimony.

He advised that the call should be done in a manner that would promote peace and unity among the diverse ethnic nationalities.

Speaking on freedom

during a drama presentation organised by the Divine Oracle Ministries International which took place at the Assemblies of God Church, Tunga Minna, Gowon said he did not see anything wrong with calls for restructuring that should breed bad blood among Nigerians.

He said: "There was nothing wrong for anybody or group to call for self actualization, but such clamours for should be done through due process and in a civilised

manner devoid of bitterness, acrimony or for the country's dismemberment.

"Restructuring is a good thing so long as it further widens Nigeria's polity, creates ample level playing field for all Nigerians to have greater sense of belonging and pride."

Gowon, while saying he saw the country through its darkest days of civil war, cautioned politicians on the need to guard against playing the ethnic cards

to drum support for their cause.

He also warned against over religious and sensation of issues to whip up sentiments against national cohesion and interests, adding that, "all issues of restructuring should be done without calls for Nigeria's balkanisation".

"Our politicians must keep this in mind, to engage on issue based politicking and avoid politics of ethnicity or religion."