

THIS DAY



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Over 136 Dead in Yobe *Boko Haram* Attacks

• *President orders security chiefs to get bombers*

No fewer than 136 people have been confirmed dead in the wake of the simultaneous bomb attacks and shootings in Damaturu, the Yobe State capital, at the weekend.

Sources with the National Emergency Management Agency, who visited the state hospital in Damaturu, confirmed that of the 136 who died, 135

From Kunle Akogun in Abuja and Michael Olugbode in Damaturu

were male and one was female. In addition, 17 people were injured, comprising 13 male and four female.

The wave of bomb attacks in Yobe and Borno States prompted President Goodluck Jonathan to cancel his scheduled trip to Bayelsa State to attend the wedding of his brother, in order to focus on the securi-

ty situation in north-east Nigeria.

Although no group has claimed responsibility for the attacks, the bombings, targeted at the police headquarters, office of the Special Anti-terrorism Squad and that of the Nigeria Civil Defence Corps within the state sec-

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retariat complex in the Damaturu, were believed to have been carried out by about 300 men suspected to be members of *Boko Haram*.

An official of the Nigerian Red Cross, Ibrahim Bulama, said the attacks started on Friday when a car bomb exploded outside a three-storey building used as a military office and barracks.

The gunmen also blew up a branch of First Bank of Nigeria Plc and attacked at least three police stations and some churches.

By yesterday, some of the residents who braved the violence to leave their homes were confronted by the sight of the destruction—burnt military and police vehicles with the burnt corpses of the drivers who died in their seats.

Bulama spoke to a news agency by telephone yesterday from a Muslim burial ground in the city as his family buried a relative and friend, a police officer who died after suffering a gunshot wound to the head in the fighting.

"There's that fear that something might possibly happen again," he said.

The Damaturu bloodbath came about three hours after the triple bomb attacks on neighbouring Maiduguri, the capital of Borno State, where suicide bombers targeted the headquarters of the Joint Task Force.

It was also gathered that Potiskum, Yobe's second major town, was attacked by *Boko Haram* whose members detonated multiple bombs in the town.

A source told THISDAY

that Potiskum was hit at approximately 5.30 pm on Friday by multiple bombs which were targeted at police structures and worship centres.

The source said: "We heard bomb blasts all over. The trouble started at about 5.30 pm when six bombs went off in different parts of the town and the main targets being the 360 Housing Estate, the Anti-terrorism Squad office and the Police headquarters and six churches as well as a mosque that were completely burnt down.

"We also learnt that St Mary's Catholic Church was burnt as well as five other churches by the *Boko Haram* sect and that the parish priest of the Catholic Church had to take refuge at a nearby police station."

A police source said the attacks could best be described as war because they were devastating and the number of casualties on the side of the police and attackers was massive, adding: "As I am currently speaking to you, we are still picking corpses."

He said the death toll could not be ascertained immediately because they were still evacuating the bodies.

"These people came to us in a snake-like attack. And sincerely, they were able to take us unawares and gain the initial edge, they bombed our office and engaged our men in a gun duel," the source added.

A civil servant resident in the town, Mallam Kalamu Ibrahim, who spoke to journalists on the phone yester-

day said, "We heard that more than 70 police officers were killed and as I am talking to you, I have not been able to get to my house since I left Maiduguri around 5.00 pm. There was gun shots everywhere, it is like the police are confused and were shooting in all directions."

He said when he called his wife, she told him that they were safe but that he should not enter Damaturu because they were told that the *Boko Haram* members were more than 300 in number and were fully armed.

Another source said this was the first time that the state would be under a massive attack, speculating that the attack was meant to debunk a statement credited to the police commissioner, Suleiman Lawal, that there were no members of the *Boko*

education for the poor," he added.

Murray-Bruce, who is awaiting the PDP National Working Committee's clearance to qualify him for the November 19 governorship primary, allayed fears that the people might be short-changed by his approach to governance.

He said that although his administration would privatise some functions of government, the people would enjoy maximum returns in the end.

"I don't want to be misunderstood. Education and medicare, for example, will be free and with the support offered by my administration, we shall deliver services with a world-class benchmark.

"It will be free but run by the private sector because of

Haram sects in Yobe.

Lawal had said there were no *Boko Haram* members in the state when he was reacting to the killing of a constable, Adamu Ali, in Damaturu by unknown gunmen.

"We are not fighting *Boko Haram* in Damaturu. We are fighting hardened criminals. You do not hear me talk of *Boko Haram* because I do not think I have *Boko Haram* here. If anybody commits any heinous crime here, it is armed robbery," he had said at the time.

The police chief could not be reached yesterday as all his phone lines were switched off.

Owing to the security situation in Yobe and Borno States, President Jonathan put off his scheduled visit to Bayelsa State on Friday when he heard of the bomb

transparency and accountability," he said.

He said an efficient government does not drive the economy, but creates the enabling environment for the private sector to thrive

"The state must provide security. I want an efficient government not an inefficient one. Apart from social services, healthcare delivery and social welfare; creating the environment for capital and foreign investment so that they can pay taxes, provide sports and entertainment, so that they can attract tourism and create wealth, everything else will be private sector driven," he added.

On the insinuations that he does not have the political structure to compete effectively in the governorship race,

attacks in Maiduguri and Damaturu.

The president's spokesman, Dr. Reuben Abati, last night debunked speculations that the cancellation had to do with the political situation in his home state, Bayelsa, where tension had risen over the delay in deciding the fate of Governor Timipre Sylva to contest for the gubernatorial ticket of the Peoples Democratic Party.

He said the president's decision was as a result of the need to devote more time to the search for peace in the troubled north-east states.

He said the president had ordered security agencies to renew their manhunt for the perpetrators of the suicide bomb attempt on a military base in Maiduguri as well as another attack in Yobe State.

Abati stated that what the

president was going for in Bayelsa was a social event which could not have been more important than the security of lives and property of Nigerians anywhere in the country.

Abati said, "The president does not feel that he should be seen attending a wedding when such incidents are happening and he has reiterated his charge to security agencies to renew the search for those behind the dastardly acts.

"He believes that for anyone to carry out such acts of destruction of lives during this season of peace deviates from the message of peace and love that ordinarily radiates around Eid-el Kabir.

"It is clear that the perpetrators of such acts are out on a selfish agenda which cannot be allowed to fester."

MURRAY-BRUCE *Cont'd from P1*

Murray-Bruce said election campaigns in the 21st century should be issue based and hinged on mapped out plans for development and not irrelevant issues like structures.

He added that the poor and vulnerable Bayelsans do not care whether anybody has the structure or not, as structures of violence and intimidation are not part of his own idea of politics.

He said: "I don't have the structure on the ground, but I am telling them what I am going to do; let the people decide if I am the right candidate or not.

"People should stop feeling sorry for me or campaigning for me. What is their problem? That is a very dumb and ignorant state-

ment by such sceptics. I expect them to be more intelligent than that and ask intelligent questions not dumb questions like asking me if I have the structure on the ground.

"Certainly, I am not running with the structure of violence, structure of cultism and intimidation of people. Is that the key to success in an election in a 21st century democracy?

"Is that what we need today or a programme to help the poor? Let the people decide."

He also dismissed the claim that given the fact that he was born and raised in Lagos, he does not have roots in Bayelsa.

He said people should follow him to the state to see the family mausoleum and his father's tomb, insisting that potentially talented but abandoned kids in the streets will