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### **Gunmen Kill 60 in Attacks on Borno Villages**

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#### **Suspected members of Boko Haram**

- Boko Haram claims responsibility
- 20 soldiers missing after attack on military camps
- President, security chiefs meet

By Muhammad Bello and Michael Olugbode

Despite the assurance by the federal government that it is winning the war against terrorism and has successfully dislodged members of the outlawed terrorist sect Boko Haram, 60 persons were killed by assailants suspected to be members of the Islamist group at the weekend in villages in Borno State.

The attacks, which also led to scores of others being injured, occurred between Saturday and Sunday in Ngom, Maisarmari and Mailari in Konduga and Mafa Local Government Areas of the state.

The rising spate of attacks, especially in Borno and Yobe States, may have formed the main item on the agenda during a meeting yesterday between

President Goodluck Jonathan and some service chiefs and members of the cabinet behind closed doors.

In attendance at the meeting were the National Security Adviser (NSA), Col. Sambo Dasuki (rtd); Minister of State for Defence, Mrs Olusola Obada; Minister of Police Affairs, Navy Captain Caleb Olubolade (rtd); Secretary to the Government of the Federation, Anyim Pius Anyim; Chief of Army Staff, Lt-General Azubike Ihejirika; Chief of Naval Staff, Vice Admiral Dele Ezeoba; Inspector General of Police, Mohammed Abubakar; and the Director-General of State Security Service (SSS) Ita Ekpeyong. At the end of the meeting, none of the attendees disclosed what was discussed.

On the attacks on the Borno communities at the weekend, it was gathered that the sect members were enraged that some residents had been giving out information to the military that had led to the casualties within the Islamist group.

A source told journalists in Maiduguri yesterday that not less than 52 villagers were killed between Saturday and Sunday in Mafa and Konduga Local Government Areas.

At Ngom village, a border town between Mafa and Konduga, insurgents invaded the village and shot 12 persons dead on Saturday night.

A politician from the area, who confirmed the death of 12 villagers to journalists, said he learnt of another attack in Konduga where 40 persons were shot dead.

He said there were numerous persons injured in the attacks on the villages, with those who suffered severe injuries taken to hospitals in Maiduguri for treatment.

An official at the University of Maiduguri Teaching Hospital, who spoke off the record to journalists, confirmed that 26 persons who were brought to the hospital on Sunday were still at the hospital yesterday receiving treatment from gunshot wounds.

Boko Haram members had in the past launched attacks and killed villagers whom they accused of being informants to security agencies and youth vigilante groups who have hunted them down.

Last month alone, 45 villagers were said to have been killed in two separate villages in Borno State.

Another source told journalists that during the weekend attacks on the villages, there was no gunfire, insisting that members of the outlawed sect members attacked the three villages, killing 31 people, by slitting their throats in their houses and mosques.

He noted that the strategy must have been used in order not to attract the attention of security agents during the attacks.

A source with the Joint Task Force (JTF) also revealed yesterday that 12 persons were killed at Ngom while 19 other villagers' throats were slit in surrounding villages on Sunday.

He said the killings compelled the task force to cordon off the road leading to Dikwa for several hours.

On the Ngom casualties, the JTF source revealed: "I cannot tell you details of the attacks, but it was certain that gunmen in military and police uniforms attacked Ngom village, 20 kilometres east of Maiduguri, the state capital. The incident occurred in the early hours of Saturday, before we were alerted on the village attacks and killings.

"On reaching the village, the gunmen had fled in their vehicles and motorcycles. But the village head told us that 12 of his people were killed. The victims' hands were tied to their backs, before they were killed by slitting their throats."

A resident of Mailari, Aisami Bukar, told journalists in Maiduguri: "We saw gunmen in military and police uniforms at dawn with some vehicles and motorcycles who proceeded towards our village on the Maiduguri-Bama Road, chanting God is great in Arabic when the gunmen started to kill some of us here in this village one by one, until 11 villagers were slain by slitting their throats."

He added: "The following day at Maisamari village, a different set of gunmen also invaded and attacked the village in the early hours of Sunday and killed eight more people while they were praying in two mosques at dawn, before soldiers rushed to the village at about 8 am."

At the time of filing this report, no official statement had been obtained from JTF, as attempts to get its spokesman, Lt. Col. Sagir Musa, proved abortive.

In the meantime, the self-acclaimed leader of the sect, Abubakar Shekau, yesterday claimed responsibility for the recent attacks on some towns in both Borno and Yobe States.

Shekau, in a Sallah message to his followers while accepting responsibility for the attacks on Bama, Mallam Fatori, Gomboru-Ngala (in Borno) and Damaturu (in Yobe), said the military was being deceptive over its campaign winning against the terrorist group.

The leader of the sect, who also said his group was responsible for the killing of people in Biu, promised to continue on the killing spree until Borno, Yobe and the rest of Northern Nigeria is Islamised, even as he insisted that he was engaged in a war that victory was already assured as the war is holy and supported by God.

He boasted that the sect was too much for the Nigeria government to handle and even with the assistance of America and France, it was not a "winnable

war” since it is a battle with God.

Shekau accused the JTF of merely gathering weapons and showcasing them to having been recovered from the sect, stressing that the military has not recovered anything from them and the sect was waxing stronger.

The sect leader stated that the military was deceiving people by saying they had finished with them, adding that members of the sect are still alive.

He called on people to join the sect and shun democracy and western education for Islam and the course of the Jihad.

He said: “The military is lying to the world about the battle we had with them; they lied that they had killed our members, but we are the ones that have killed the soldiers.

“We call on you all to repent and come to the ways of Allah. Forget about constitution and accept Shariah. We don’t have socialism, we don’t know communism, we don’t want federalism, but we are Muslims.

“You soldiers have claimed that you are powerful, that we have been defeated, that we are mad people; but how can a mad man successfully coordinate recent attacks in Gamboru, in Malumfatori, slaughter people in Biu, kill in Gwoza and in Bama where soldiers fled under our heavy fire power.

“We have killed countless soldiers and we are going to kill more. Our strength and firepower has surpassed that of Nigeria. Nigeria is no longer a big deal as far as we are concerned. We can now comfortably confront the United States of America.

“Let the world know that we have been enjoined by Allah to kill the unbelievers just like how we were enjoined to slaughter rams during Eid-el Kabir.

“And we shall continue to kill those who strive to stand against the will of Allah by opposing Sharia. We don’t mind if we die doing this because it is even a blessing for us to die in this cause and gain paradise. So we are winning on either side.

“It is never too late for you to repent and join us on the path of righteousness.”

In a related development, it has emerged that 20 soldiers went missing following the August 4 attacks on two military camps in Mallam Fatori.

The online news medium, Premium Times, quoted military sources as stating that the attackers, suspected to be members of Boko Haram, arrived the Section Four camp manned by the Multinational Joint Task Force (MNJTF) at about 5.30 am that day and took the soldiers by surprise.

“The insurgents came around 5.30 am, surrounded the camp and launched a surprise attack on the camp which gave them an edge over us. Our men were caught off-guard,” one of the sources said.

He added that as a result of the surprise attack, the Boko Haram insurgents overwhelmed the units they met on the ground and some of the soldiers were chased as far as Niger Republic.

Sources also said the soldiers were also surprised by the firepower of the attackers who reportedly also took away with them some weapons from the camp.

They however said members of the MNJTF later re-grouped and took back one of the camps, adding however that “the insurgents are still in control of one of the camps”.

THISDAY sources said because of the fear of ambush, soldiers on the ground were yet to launch a rescue mission for the over 20 missing soldiers who are still missing with their weapons.

The authorities have simply declared them “missing in action,” another source said. “But there is apprehension that the men have been killed,” he added.

Shortly after the attack, the JTF in Maiduguri issued a statement claiming that only two soldiers and a policeman were killed in the attack.

However, the JTF commander in the state, Major General Jah Ewansiah, reportedly informed the Borno State Governor, Kashim Shettima, when he visited the JTF headquarters on a condolence visit that 12 soldiers were killed in the attack.

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