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Boko Haram, Militia Kill 29 in Borno, Benue

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Members of Boko Haram

George Okoh in Makurdi and Michael Olugbode in Maiduguri with agency report

About 14 pro-government vigilante youths popularly called Civilian JTF were feared killed in an attack on the north-eastern town of Bama, Borno State on Sunday.

Just as the dastardly act was perpetrated, another report yesterday revealed that 15 persons were killed by armed militia in Agbena and Agbaaga villages in Ukum Local Government Area of Benue State.

In the Borno State, local vigilante groups run by youth volunteers have been instrumental in helping the military capture Boko Haram members, but they have also made them a target for the insurgents, drawing civilians further into the conflict.

Alhaji Baba Shehu Gulumba, chairman of Bama local government area told journalists in the nearest main city of Maiduguri, that insurgents disguised as soldiers and lured the youths into a trap. Nine others were wounded.

"They were on guard duty when the sect members dressed in military camouflage came and told them that they were needed at a meeting nearby." "When they had been lured away from their duty posts they were then attacked and killed," he said.

Bama is the centre of the insurgency. The town is not far from a mountainous area along the Cameroun border where many Boko Haram fighters were believed to be holding out, after being cleared from other areas by the military Joint Task Force (JTF).

Last Monday, suspected Islamists killed 44 people in the village of Bemba, near Lake Chad, an area of porous borders with Niger, Cameroun and Chad that was an Islamist stronghold before President Goodluck Jonathan declared a state of emergency in the North-east in the middle of May.

Meanwhile, while giving an account of the killing in Agbena and Agbaaga villages in Ukum Local Government Area of Benue State, local residents said about 20 militias invaded the two villages in the early hours of yesterday, armed with sophisticated weapons, after initially invading the communities at about 8 p.m. on Sunday night, without resistance.

Reacting to the incident, the state Commissioner of Police, Mr. Adams Audu, said the police was yet to get the full details of the incident.

He said: "We must all desist from speculating on the nature of the crisis and the number of deaths until the full details of matter is ready and I will make it available to you. I just held a meeting with the Divisional Police Officer and Area Commanders of the affected areas, but I must say that upon by resumption of office as the Commissioner of Police in Benue state, some of the nagging challenges I met on ground was from the Ukum axis. Since then, I have taken decisive steps to check the crisis until this latest incident."

"I can however assure you that we are on top of the situation and all those behind this latest crisis will be apprehended, but in the meantime allow us to investigate and get the full details. I can also assure Benue people that we are not resting but I must urge the people of the state to be vigilant and not take anything for granted; please report any strange movements in your area to the nearest Police post because we are determined to safeguard the lives and property of the people of this state irrespective of where they are located."

The police commissioner also disclosed that the police had arrested three thousand criminals in the last four months even as he said the police has zero tolerance for crime in the state.

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