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Massive Onslaught against Boko Haram in Borno, Yobe

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Nigerian Army

- 95 insurgents killed
- Sect members in surprise attacks on Damaturu
- 24-hour curfew imposed on Yobe

By Michael Olugbode

The Nigerian Army on Thursday launched a massive air and ground onslaught against Boko Haram in Borno killing 74 insurgents and destroying the deadly sect's camp in Galangi and Kawanti villages.

But in neighbouring Yobe State, members of the sect launched surprise attacks on Damaturu, the state capital, and engaged the military in gun duels for several hours, forcing the imposition of 24 hour curfew on the state by the Army.

The military confirmed that 21 members of the sect were killed in Yobe, bringing the total number of casualties suffered by the sect in both states to 95.

The spokesman of 3 Division, Special Operation Battalion, Capt. Eli Lazarus, in a statement said: "At about 5.30pm Wednesday 24, October 2013, gunmen in large number suspected to be Boko Haram terrorists attacked a military checkpoint close to NNPC Mega Station along Maiduguri-Damaturu Road. Troops of 3 Division Special Operation Battalion had fierce encounter with the terrorist in various parts of Damaturu, the Yobe State capital, for several hours.

"Twenty one of the terrorist were killed during the encounter while three of their vehicles were recovered."

He said items recovered include four AK47 rifles, one FN rifle, one rocket propel grenade, and one rocket grenade bomb (RPG). Spokesman for the division, who said this in a statement, added that the 24-hour curfew took immediate effect.

"The 3 Division Special Operations Battalion, Damaturu, hereby imposes a 24-hour curfew across Yobe State, with immediate effect. Law-abiding citizens are enjoined to remain calm as the battalion steps up its operation to rid the state of insurgents", he said.

Lazarus did however not give civilian casualties in the attack on the town, but residents said about 50 persons might have lost their lives in the attacks.

Though the spokesman of the Army in Damaturu was also silent on the extent of damage, sources said that the mobile police base, the police Area Command, the state CID, all along Gujba road, were burnt down and some detainees freed.

Reports also indicate that the 234 Army Battalion along Maiduguri road was equally attacked by the insurgents.

There were reports that the insurgents went to Gen. Sani Abacha Specialist Hospital and carted away two brand new ambulances and huge quantity of drugs at the hospital.

There were also speculation that the Army and other security agencies recorded high casualties including a captain.

On the onslaught against the sect in Borno, a statement by the Deputy Director, Army Public Relations of the 7 Division Maiduguri, Lt. Col. Muhammad Dole, said: "In continuation of the ongoing offensive operation against terrorists, the troops of 7 Division Nigerian Army destroyed another Boko Haram terrorists camp in Galangi and Kawanti villages within Mainok general area of Borno State on Thursday October 24, 2013."

Dole said several sect members fled the destroyed camp with serious injuries, while two Isuzu Tiger Pick Up vehicles and five Hilux Toyota vans belonging to the insurgents were also destroyed.

While noting that two soldiers were injured in the operation, Dole, expressed appreciation of the General Officer Commanding 7 Division Nigerian Army, Maj. Gen. Obidah Ethan, to the general public for their resilience and cooperation by providing timely and credible information to security agencies.

He also reiterated the commitment of the Division to ensuring safety of lives and properties of all citizens within its area of operation.

Also last night, unknown gunmen suspected be members of Boko Haram attacked a police checkpoint in Kaduna and shot three policemen. Details of the attack were still sketchy at the time of going to press.

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