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Female Suicide Bomber, Soldier Killed in Foiled Bomb Attack in Gombe

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Defence Headquarter

Epidemic looms in Borno as corpses litter attacked communities

Segun Awofadeji in Gombe, Senator Iroegbu in Abuja and Michael Olugbode in Maiduguri with agency report

A new dimension may have been introduced to the pattern of attacks by suspected members of the terrorist Boko Haram sect as a female suicide bomber was yesterday killed along with a soldier in Gombe town before she could get to her target. Suicide bombers have traditionally been men.

The woman, according to sources, had strapped herself with the bombs and covered herself in a flowing hijab, while also carrying a handbag, which sources said, contained the detonator.

Yesterday's incident is coming on the heels of an explosion that claimed the lives of three soldiers in front of the residence of Gombe State Governor, Alhaji Ibrahim Hassan Dankwambo, last Thursday.

Yesterday's foiled bomb attack occurred in front of the 301 Artillery Regiment Quarter Guard in the heart of Gombe town, the capital of Gombe State.

According to sources, a woman suspected to be a suicide bomber hid the explosives in her bag but the bomb went off prematurely before she could get to her target said to have been the military quarter guard that houses the office of the Commandant on Biu Road, Gombe.

However, the explosion claimed the lives of a soldier and the female bomber whose body was blown to pieces by the blast, a security source said.

"The explosion occurred at about 11 am at the military quarter guard barracks along Biu Road in Gombe," the source said, adding that "the woman had the explosive in her bag, but it went off prematurely".

The source explained further that the explosion led to the death of a soldier as well.

Although the woman hadn't arrived her destination when the bomb went off, chances were high that the military quarter guard barracks was her target.

No one has claimed responsibility for the blast.

Recounting the incident, a trader in Gombe, Bello Kasuwankatako told Reuters, "I heard a loud sound and then black smoke covering the place ... We saw soldiers moving bodies."

Confirming the incident yesterday, the Defence Headquarters (DHQ), in a statement, explained that troops mounting a security checkpoint at the entrance to Quarter Guard Barracks in Gombe yesterday morning intercepted a lady suicide bomber while she was attempting to gain entry into the barracks.

The Director of Defence Information (DDI), Major-General Chris Olukolade, said the suspected suicide bomber concealed the device under her hijab.

"The lady suicide bomber who had primed herself with improvised explosive devices concealed under her hijab was intercepted when troops acting on an intelligence report indicating that a terrorist group was plotting to attack a barracks around Gombe using female suicide bombers," he said.

According to Olukolade, the bomb on the woman exploded while she was being searched, leading to her death and that of the soldier conducting the search.

Meanwhile, local sources have said the death toll from the series of attacks carried out in neighbouring Borno State has exceeded 110.

This is just as residents in Borno communities yesterday raised the alarm over the likelihood of an epidemic breaking out in parts of Borno, as corpses continue to litter some villages that were attacked by the Boko Haram terrorists last week.

Speaking to journalists in Maiduguri after a meeting of stakeholders of the affected areas in Gwoza Local Government Area, the district head in one of the wards under siege, Lawan John, now seeking refuge in the state capital, said 109 people had so far been buried since the attacks.

He said: "Corpses still litter our villages because we do not have access to the villages as the insurgents are still hanging around there."

He revealed that none of the people of the area who had since fled had summoned enough courage to go back and bury their dead relatives and friends.

According to him, several other residents of the affected communities have also been trapped in the mountains and hills without food and water for over five days.

"They rely on people from Pogu village who go there to give them food, and right now there is no food left in the village," the district head said.

He said in some of these villages, the insurgents still moved around on motorcycles and shot at anyone who attempts to descend from the hills.

Another resident of the area, who spoke on the condition of anonymity, said the corpses would have decomposed by now, warning that there could be epidemic if the whole area is not fumigated after the corpses might have been evacuated.

He said it was sad that "they (insurgents) kill our people and they won't allow us to give them proper burials, their corpses are left to lie and rot away on the road which is not befitting for even a dead animal."

It was also learnt that there is also the danger of a humanitarian crisis in the area as it was gathered that over 1,000 people have been displaced in the last one week as a result of the incessant bloody attacks on the communities in Gwoza by the terrorists.

Senator Mohammed Ali Ndume, who called the meeting of the stakeholders of the area, said his people were made to go through untold hardship by the recent attacks as over 1,000 persons had been displaced and several properties lost.

Speaking on behalf of the stakeholders to journalists, Ndume, representing Borno South Senatorial District in the National Assembly, said the killing of people and burning of property were still ongoing in some of the villages, including Gavva, Agapalagu, Chikide, Dushwale, Ngoshe and Ashigashiya.

He said: "We are here to salvage the condition of our people. As a quick solution, we have sought for military intervention in six wards in Gwoza East that are currently under siege and as I am speaking to you now, there is no military presence in these areas except in Pulka, but we have been pressing on the security agencies to salvage the situation."

According to the senator, they had set up a committee to distribute relief materials to the displaced people.

He called on NGOs and individuals from Gwoza to assist the displaced people with food and funds.

He said the Borno State Government had released N10 million, including donations from Gwoza indigenes living outside the area, adding that once the areas

under siege were accessible, the funds would be used for the benefit of the displaced persons who did not make it to Maiduguri.

Chairperson of the relief committee, who is also the Borno State Commissioner for Commerce and Industries, Dr. Asabe Vilita, said three camps had been opened for some of the displaced persons in Maiduguri.

According to her, 680 displaced persons were camped in Tashan Bama; 426 in EYN Church, Wulari; and 50 persons in Mule Area of Maiduguri.

She also appealed to well-meaning individuals to come to the aid of the displaced persons.

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