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Bridge Linking Borno to Gombe Blown up by Insurgents

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Armed Boko Haram insurgents

- Gunmen kill pastor, injure wife

Olusegun Awofadeji and Michael Olugbode

The bridge along the Maiduguri-Biu-Gombe Expressway linking Borno to Gombe State has been blown up by suspected members of the outlawed Boko Haram sect.

THISDAY had reported last week that most parts of the highway linking Maiduguri to Gombe had been taken over by the insurgents, forcing many motorists to take the longer route – Maiduguri-Damaturu-Potiskum – into and from the troubled Borno State.

With the bombing of the bridge, which occurred yesterday morning, all hopes of travelling to Gombe through Biu from Maiduguri have been dashed.

THISDAY gathered that the insurgents planted an Improvised Explosive Devices (IEDs) under the bridge and destroyed critical portions of the bridge.

The destruction left motorists and passengers stranded in the early hours of yesterday.

According to one of the residents of the area, Mallam Musa Yakubu, a loud bang was heard at about 2am yesterday when people were asleep.

“We heard a loud bang on Sunday morning and when we gathered in Madafuma village to go round our surroundings early in the morning, we found out that the bridge linking us with Biu Local Government Area and Ma Dara Girau had been blown up.

“All motorists heading to Maiduguri from Biu, especially long vehicles, had no option than to make U-turn back to Gombe.

“Unfortunately, small vehicles had to manage the remaining portion of the bridge which was not affected by the blast, but they are taking a big risk by plying the bridge,” Musa lamented.

Meanwhile, unknown gunmen may have killed a pastor named Ayuba Moriya and seriously injured his wife and five other members of his family.

This came barely one week after some unidentified gunmen had attacked Nahuta village, a suburb of Bauchi metropolis, killing one person and burning several houses.

The current incident, THISDAY learnt, occurred in Dilimi village, Toro Local Government Area of Bauchi State, when the gunmen stormed the pastor’s house around 11 pm on Saturday night.

The Bauchi State Police Command confirmed the killing of the late pastor through its spokesman, Deputy Superintendent of Police (DSP) Haruna Mohammed, stating the attackers used a Dane gun and made away with undisclosed sums of money belonging to the family.

Mohammed added that during the incident, the attackers also carted away property belonging to the family, saying the corpse of the deceased had been taken by the police to Tafawa-Balewa Teaching Hospital.

According to Mohammed, the command discovered three empty cartridges including dangerous sticks suspected to have been used for killing the late pastor.

He said the command had since dispatched its intelligence unit to hunt for the fleeing attackers.

Residents of the area said the gunmen got access to the pastor’s house through the back door after failed attempts to destroy the main gate made of iron and immediately told the victim’s wife of their mission to kill her husband.

Eyewitness said the killers riveted the area with sporadic gunshots, a development that made residents to run for safety instead of making attempts to rescue the pastor and his family from the hands of their killers.

THISDAY further learnt the area seemed to be a stronghold of the Boko Haram sect where they carry out training and operate unchecked despite repeated complaints to the authorities.

Speaking on the circumstances surrounding the death of her husband, Mrs. Rifkatu Ayuba Moriya, who was in tears and in company of sympathisers, said the killers of her husband were over 20 in number and wore army uniforms.

“On getting to the house, they told me that they were here to kill my husband and asked us to say our last prayers after which they dragged my husband outside and shot him several times while others cut him several times with a machets,” Rifkatu said.

Rifkatu added that they insisted on killing my two-year old son or abducting our daughter while others said they should kill me since I had refused to release them, but there was no body to rescue us.

According to the widow, her husband had repeatedly reported threats to his life to the authorities, but nothing was done to that effect and blamed government for the security challenges in the state.

Speaking on the incident, the Chairman, Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN), Bauchi chapter, Rev. Lawi Pokti lamented the attack, stating it was targeted at the church and the Christian community in the area.

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