

Gambari, at his palace in the Kwara State capital.

Jonathan was in Ilorin for the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) presidential campaign rally.

He expressed confidence that with the delivery of the equipment in two weeks, the military would move faster towards halting insurgency.

“You have observed us for the past four years. Yes, we have security challenges relating to the Boko Haram saga mainly in the North-east.”

“Although their excesses extend to other parts of the North like Abuja, Sokoto, Gombe and Kano, but it is mainly in the North-east. We are working hard and we shall surely bring it to a halt.

“As far as the military is concerned, even as we are talking, we are expecting more platforms this week and next week.

“I believe that in the next two weeks or so, we will be able to move faster than we are moving.

“We have intervened in so many areas; agriculture that touches the life of the ordinary Nigerian is one of the areas that we have been working very hard on.

“We are trying to move agriculture to the next level, to a level that young graduates will be able to embrace,” Jonathan said.

He assured the emir that his administration was poised to move the nation forward by creating more jobs, as well as diversifying the economy. Jonathan told the traditional ruler that he was in the palace to personally inform him that he was interested in seeking re-election.

He also introduced the party’s governorship candidate in the state, Senator Simeon Ajibola, to the tradition ruler.

He said under the PDP, people of the state would continue to enjoy freedom and improved quality of life.

Gambari told the president that having watched his performance over the years, he was convinced that he had done very well.

He prayed that God would crown the president’s effort with success. He urged all politicians to conduct their campaigns without violence. He said since he heard of the president’s campaign trip to the state, he had been praying to God to make it hitch-free.

Earlier, the National Chairman of the PDP, Alhaji Adamu Mu’azu, had told the emir that the delegation was in the palace to seek his support and prayers so that the PDP could continue the good work it had started.

As the president opened up on the additional equipment expected to arrive this week, dozens of insurgents were killed yesterday when the military continued its ground and air mop-up activities in the aftermath of “diversionary terrorist attacks on Maiduguri and Konduga on Sunday”.

A statement by PR Nigeria, a media advisory to government security agencies, said security sources confirmed that at least 53 more terrorists lost their lives, as troops in pursuit of the terrorists engaged those that fled and the additional reinforcements on the outskirts of Konduga and Maiduguri in a battle from Sunday night to early yesterday morning.

According to PR Nigeria, the sources added that health and emergency workers were contending with the challenge of evacuating terribly mangled corpses of the terrorists for mass burial.

Also, a tweet on the twitter handle of the Defence Headquarters disclosed that a substantial number of heavy weapons had been captured in addition to the number of terrorists that died between Sunday and Monday.

It added that Nigerian forces also recorded some casualties but “troops and air force patrols are still ongoing”.

A military source told PR Nigeria that the suicidal attempt on Maiduguri and Konduga might have been staged to divert troops’ attention from their goal of commencing the “once and for all” battle against the terrorists by members of the Multinational Joint Task Force (MJTF) from Cameroun, Niger, Nigeria and Chad planned for early this week.

There are fears that saboteurs among local sympathisers in one of the affected communities might have betrayed the troops, especially on the plan to annihilate the terrorists in order to pave the way for the success and peaceful conduct of the forthcoming elections in every part of the country.

A top intelligence source also told THISDAY that there are ongoing operations on several fronts by the troops, as they fight to reclaim lost territories, including Monguno, which was captured by the terrorists on Sunday.

The source said that even though the towns were yet to be liberated, the terrorists are dying in large numbers with their charred bodies littering the streets and bushes due to the pitched battles.

“There is a fierce battle going on in Monguno, supported by the continuous aerial bombardment of their position. As a result, there are many casualties on their side. Many of them are being killed and the charred bodies of their fighters are all over the place,” the source said.

Meanwhile, the headquarters of Michika Local Government Area in Adamawa State was reportedly attacked by the Boko Haram sect yesterday.

A military source, who confirmed the attack, revealed that the military authorities had drafted more troops to the area so as to repel the insurgents from taking control of the town and its environs.

The source said the Nigeria troops, in collaboration with local hunters, were involved in the fierce battle with the insurgents.

He expressed confidence that the troops would overwhelm the insurgents in the battle for Michika.

Also confirming the attack, the secretary of the local hunters association, Mr. James Philip, revealed that the insurgents had been on the rampage for three days in communities around Michika.

He said people living in the affected communities had fled and taken refuge in the surrounding hills while some were hiding in the bushes.

He said although the insurgents had killed several people in the areas, the troops and local hunters were doing everything possible to repel them completely from the communities.

“The troops also killed several insurgents. These boys don’t stay in Michika; they come from their hideouts to attack whenever they want to, and normally come in their hundreds to attack,” he said.

An eyewitness also disclosed that the insurgents stormed Michika at about 4 pm from Sambisa forest, but on reaching the town they met stiff resistance from the troops detailed to cordon off the area.

The member representing Michika in the Adamawa State House of Assembly, Adamu Kamale, also confirmed that for three days the insurgents had had a field day, in surrounding areas before targeting Michika.

He urged the federal government to act fast to prevent the insurgents from overrunning Michika and wiping out other surrounding villages.

In September last year, Michika was captured by the insurgents for some weeks. However, troops and local hunters, in a counter-attack, recovered the town.

In a related development, former South African defence force soldiers will reportedly form the core of a multinational team of private military experts, who are en route to Nigeria, to help the country fight against Boko Haram militants.

Netwerk24 reported yesterday that the 100-strong team has been tasked with training the Nigerian military in a massive campaign against the terrorist organisation.

According to the Netwerk24 report, Boko Haram leaders and fighters will be targeted.

The team will attempt to thwart Boko Haram’s bloody raids and also try to free the remaining kidnapped Chibok schoolgirls. More than 200 schoolgirls were kidnapped by Boko Haram last year.

The leader of the team told Netwerk24 that they are not mercenaries, but have a government contract to assist the Nigerian military with training. The team involves South Africans who gained experience during the border wars, as well as Britons, Indians and other nationalities.

The African Union is reportedly considering military intervention as a regional multinational force including Niger, Chad and Cameroun to fight against Boko Haram.

An earlier report revealed that a team of South Africans were involved in training Nigerian soldiers, and the Nigerian government had asked for additional training.

A military expert earlier in January warned that South Africa would be under threat if its soldiers joined AU forces in fighting against Boko Haram.

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