

# Boko Haram Fights Back in Maiduguri Suburb, One Officer, Six Soldiers Killed

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*Head of the counter-insurgency operation in the North-east and Theatre Commander of Operation Lafiya Dole, Major General Lucky Irabor*

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- **Theatre Commander: It's not true**
- **Army announces recovery of corpses of missing officer, 15 soldiers**

Olawale Olaleye in Lagos and Michael Olugbode in Maiduguri

The Boko Haram terror group fought back on Sunday, invading Cinki Gundu, an outskirt of Maiduguri, the Bornu State capital, where an officer and six soldiers were killed. Eight others were injured.

Although military authorities denied the latest incursion of the terrorists, less than two weeks after Boko Haram's flag was presented to President Muhammadu Buhari as a mark of the military's total subjugation of the fanatical religious sect, THISDAY sources said Cinki Gundu is now being used as the terrorists' operational base.

"Outright falsehood," Maj-Gen Lucky Irabor, the Theatre Commander of Operation Lafiya Dole, the military taskforce clearing the North-east of the insurgents, told THISDAY in a text message last night.

Irabor who had earlier yesterday in Maiduguri addressed the press on the mop-up operations of the military where he said there were still pockets of resistance by the insurgents that were being contained, however, admitted that an operation at Bulakesa village claimed the lives of an officer and four soldiers, while three other soldiers were wounded.

He said 50 insurgents were killed in action while three AK47 rifles and several weapons and grenade were recovered from them, adding that nine terrorists and 18 minors were arrested during the operation.

But THISDAY sources were emphatic yesterday that Cinki Gundu was under the control of Boko Haram, naming one Ba Umar, a second lieutenant, as the officer killed during the attack. A source added that one of the slain soldiers, a majority of whom were said to have newly joined the army five months ago in 2016, was identified as Corporal Idowu Shoneyin of the 153 Task Force Battalion.

According to the sources, the Nigerian troops went on a fighting patrol at Cinki Gundu, when they came in confrontation with the Boko Haram fighters, who immediately opened fire on them, killing five on the spot in the first attack.

"One second lieutenant and four soldiers were killed immediately in action in the first attack. The information just came in now (Tuesday) that they were killed on Sunday. Two out of those soldiers killed joined the army in 2016, not more than five months ago," the source said, pleading anonymity as the military authorities might want to keep the information under wraps following their recent celebration for overcoming Boko Haram.

Cinki Gundu is under Division 8 Task Force Headquarters in Monguno, Maiduguri, where the Boko Haram members are said to be in their thousands, being their new operational base. The source said it took the intervention of a fighter jet from neighbouring Chad to stem the tide of

attack and killing, saying "if not, the casualty would have been more than five in this particular attack".

He reiterated that it was the fighter jet from Chad that alerted the Nigerian troops of the danger ahead and asked them to retreat immediately because the Boko Haram members already outnumbered them. He said the fighter jet was able to repel their attacks before they eventually beat a retreat.

Remains of the late officer and the four soldiers from the first attack, the source said, had been taken to and deposited at the Maiduguri Teaching Hospital.

The soldiers, including Shoneyin, the source claimed, were killed while trying to rescue the officer, Umar, who had been run over by the Armoured Personnel Carrier (APC) while trying to manoeuvre away from the Boko Haram fire power.

"As it is now, Cinki Gundu is controlled by the Boko Haram", he said, adding that it might have become their operational base, having been mopped up and chased out of Sambisa towards the end of last year.

However, while the military was still smarting from the Cinki Gundu attack on its men, during which it lost five of its men, members of the Boko Haram sect, in a second attack, took the fight to the military at one of their locations in Maiduguri called the Old Marte on Tuesday night.

Although the source was unable to give details of the Old Marte attack as it was still being monitored on the radio at the time of gathering the information.

THISDAY gathered that about 10 casualties were also recorded at the incident, all of whom had been taken to the Division 7 hospital, while the sect members allegedly made away with a lot of the Army ammunition.

However, whilst two of the soldiers at the Old Marte attack were said to have been killed in action (KIA), eight others, the source said, were badly wounded in action (WIA). The Old Marte is also under Division 8 Task Force Headquarters in Monguno.

The source, who also spoke briefly on the plight of the Nigerian military at the war front, lamented the ugly treatment being allegedly meted out to them, especially the fact that they are being less treated when compared to their colleagues in other wings of the armed forces, also at the same battlefield.

"The Army pays the soldiers operational allowance of N30, 000. 00 every month instead of N45, 000. 00. The excuse the Army authorities gave is that N15,000.00 out of the money is meant for their feeding but their sister force, I mean the Air Force, is collecting its complete N45,000.00 in the same operation and yet, they eat outside of this same operational provision."

Irabor, however, denied that soldiers were being short paid.

### **Army recovers corpses of missing officer and 15 soldiers**

Meanwhile, corpses of an officer and 15 soldiers declared missing about two months ago by the Nigerian Army have been found along a riverbank in Borno, Irabor said yesterday.

Addressing a press conference in Maiduguri on the successes recorded in the ongoing counter-insurgency war in the North-east in the last one week, Irabor said the corpses of the missing officer and 15 soldiers were found along Kamadugou River line.

He said: "On January 5, 2017 at about 0745hrs, own troops in conjunction with CJTF conducted clearance operation along DAMASAK – GASHIGAR road. The troops successfully cleared DUOMA, ASAGA, GASHIGAR and other surrounding villages. At ASAGA village, our troops encountered and dislodged some BHT elements.

"Subsequently, the troops recovered corpses of one officer and 15 soldiers earlier declared Missing in Action during their dislodgment from GASHIGAR on October 16, 2016. The corpses were recovered along Kamadugou River line. Among the recovered corpses was that of Lt Col K Yusuf, the former Commanding Officer of 223 Tank Battalion. They have since been buried in Maimalari Cantonment Cemetery with full military honours.

He added that: "On 8 Jan 17 at about 1125hrs, own troops in conjunction with CJTF conducted clearance operation to METELE village and encountered pockets of BHT which were successfully cleared. The troops also cleared all identified BHT hideouts from DOGON CHUKU toward TUMBUN RAGO. During the operation, six BHT were killed in action while two of our soldiers were wounded in action. The wounded soldiers are currently receiving treatment in our medical facility in Baga."

He equally revealed that: "On 8 Jan 17 at 0830hrs, own troops conducted clearance operation in MANAWASI and GAREL villages. The troops encountered BHT at BULAKESA village. The troops successfully cleared the BHT with support from Air Component and dominated the village. Sadly,

an officer and 4 soldiers were killed in action while 3 other soldiers were wounded. A total of 50 BHT were killed in action while 3 AK47 rifles and several weapons and grenade were recovered from the BHT. Also, nine BHT adults and 18 minors were arrested during the operation."

He said: "On 3 Jan 17 at about 1240hrs, four women and 13 children were apprehended by vigilantes at BUNI YADI and were later handed over to our troops. Preliminary investigation revealed that the women were wives of BHTs who fled from Sambisa Forest as a result of our operations. All suspects are in our custody undergoing investigation."

The Commander also revealed that: "On 9 Jan 17, a surrendered BHT identified a male sympathiser as BHT spy to MONGUNO and identified 2 wives of BHT Amir from the arrested BHT members.

"On 4 Jan 17 at about 1300hrs, own troops at KATARKO while on patrol along GUJBA-NANAMAJI road arrested 4 BHT suspects fleeing TALALA. Their names are Babagana Mohammedu from HONG in MICHIKA LGA, Usman Usman from FUNTUA Katsitna State, Murtala Dan-azimi from KOFAR GOMBE Bauchi State and Sanusi Dahiru from SAKWAYA in Jigawa State. Arrested suspects are in own custody undergoing further interrogation."

He also said the persons who treat Boko Haram has been apprehended. He said: "On 5 Jan 17 at about 1030hrs, own troops and CJTF arrested 4 BHT suspects at SHUWARI village ahead of own checkpoint following a tip off that there were some BHT amirs lurking around. The suspects are Modu Auwami, Mamyie Modu, Usman Kachanawa and Mallum Maji. During preliminary investigation, some local witnesses identified Modo Auwami as the one who used to provide medical treatment to injured BHT and had been seen wielding AK47 rifle on several occasions. The other 3 suspects claimed they were abducted by the BHT but only spent few days in their camps. The suspects are all from DAGUMBA and GUMSHE in MAFA and DIKWA LGA respectively. The suspects are in custody undergoing further interrogation."

He also said: "On 3 Jan 17 at about 1430hrs, own troops in conjunction with CJTF arrested four BHT suspects namely: Usman Alhaji Karama, Wakil Aga, Biye Kunti and Maimusa Khadi at SHUARI village close to custom house. The suspects were from DAGUMBA village in MAFA LGA and they all confessed to be BHT members. They claimed to have come to town to buy Tramadol tablets as they were arrested with 27 sachets of Tramadol tablets, 3 sachets of Cowbel chocolate and the sum of N5,040.00 only. They are all undergoing further interrogation."