

# Dozens of Soldiers Feared Killed in Boko Haram Attack in Borno

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*Col. Onyema Nwachukwu*

- **Military denies terrorists assault on Biu, Konduga**
- **Bandits kill two in Kaduna communities, disrupt their burial**

Michael Olugbode in Maiduguri and John Shiklam in Kaduna

Scores of soldiers were feared dead on Saturday in a predawn attack on Sabon Gari village, near Biu, in Borno State. A resident of Biu, Gambo Muktar, told THISDAY by phone that the insurgents attacked the village about 4am on Saturday and caused havoc. Muktar said as many as 50 soldiers might have died in the surprise assault, which lasted about an hour.

But in a quick reaction yesterday, the Defence Headquarters (DHQ) denied knowledge of any attack in Konduga and Biu, in Borno State, by the terrorist group. Defence spokesman, Col. Onyema Nwachukwu, said he said did not receive any briefing on such attack.

But in Kaduna State on Saturday, armed bandits launched a repeat attack on Kagi village, in Birnin Gwari Local Government Area, that prevented mourners and sympathisers from burying two people the criminals had killed in raids the previous day.

Muktar said the attack on Sabon Gari lasted from 4am to 5am, and the insurgents encountered little resistance from the military personnel stationed about 25 kilometres from Biu, in the South of Borno State.

Biu is considered the birthplace of Boko Haram.

"Many of the soldiers were killed while others fled," Muktar told THISDAY.

He lamented that many weapons belonging to the soldiers were carted away by the terrorist group.

However, the Acting Director of Defence Information said, "I am not aware of any attack. I have not received any briefing on any attack. The right place to get your information is the Army."

Attempts to reach the Army spokesman, Col. Sagir Musa, were not successful, as his phone number was switched off.

The Army had earlier refuted a report about a terrorist attack on Konduga, Borno State, that allegedly killed 60 soldiers.

It had tweeted, "The attention of 7 Div Nigerian Army has been drawn to an online publication twitted yesterday, Thursday, 25 April 2019 on a purported massive attack on Konduga, which was solely designed to cause severe panic, utter chaos and pandemonium within the communities.

"The publication is not only false but a deliberate effort to smear and discredit the image and sacrifices of the entire operation as well as the peace in the North East region and the country at large."

But a source within the Nigerian Army in Maiduguri, who preferred anonymity, confirmed the attack on Sabon Gari and, however, said no casualties were recorded.

The source said, "Sabon Gari was invaded by some insurgents, the villagers and some security personnel fled from the village and no casualty is recorded for now."

One of the deadliest massacres of Nigerian soldiers by Boko Haram occurred in Metele, Borno State, in November last year. Scores of soldiers were killed at 157 Task Force Battalion in Metele. The exact casualty figure is still a closely-guarded secret. The commander of the battalion, Lt. Col. Ibrahim Sakaba, was also killed in the attack.

In the last four years, Boko Haram has attacked and sacked 22 military posts, killing hundreds of Nigerian soldiers. The sacked military posts were in Gajiram, Mainok, Rann, Geidam, Sasawa, Magumeri, Malam Fatori, Gashigha, Kanama, Gamboru-Ngala, Mafa, Damasak, Gudumbali, Garunda, Kunduga, Kareto, Jilli, Arge, Zari, Arege, Metele, and Buni Gari.

Meanwhile, in Kaduna State, bandits conducted a second raid on a village, preventing the burial of two persons killed during a first attack on Friday. The bandits were said to have attacked Kagi and Kugu villages about 6pm on Friday, killing two people and injuring two others. They allegedly stole cows and grains belonging to the villagers.

Then, about 8:40am on Saturday, when members of the community, accompanied by the police, went to bury the dead, the bandits returned and opened fire on them, chasing them away from the burial ground.

In a statement in Kaduna, the Birnin Gwari Vanguard for Security and Good Governance said the gunmen shot indiscriminately and the people, including the police, took to their heels and returned to Birnin-Gwari town for safety.

According to the statement, "Armed bandits chased away mourners from a grave yard this morning in Kagi village, about three kilometres from Government Science Secondary School, Birnin-Gwari, in Kaduna State.

"The incident occurred, around 8.40am (on Saturday), when relatives and volunteers as well as handful of policemen went to Kagi for the burial of the two victims of armed bandits' attack in the village that were on procession to the grave after the funeral prayers.

"The gunmen fired shot indiscriminately and the people as well as the police took to their heels and returned to Birnin-Gwari town for safety."

The statement said by 12 noon, about 300 vigilantes and some policemen mobilised and went back to the village for the burial.

"Although, during the attack on Friday, the Army went to the location, but returned to base, thinking the armed bandits had left, only to resurface this morning to take away remnant of cattle that return to the village," the group said.

The group expressed concern that with the attacks on communities close to Birnin-Gwari town, the invasion of the local government headquarters by gunmen might be imminent.

The statement called on the federal and state governments to deploy more security personnel to Birnin Gwari area to protect lives and property and flush out the bandits.

The spokesman of the Kaduna State police command, Yakubu Sabo, could not be reached for comments, as he did not respond to telephone calls.