

Boko Haram Captures Borno LG

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●Troops kill 20 terrorists in Lake Chad

Kingsley Nwezeh in Abuja

The war against terrorism has suffered a setback as Boko Haram captured Marte Local Government Area (LGA) of Borno State after an attack on a military base in the area.

One of the soldiers who was in the military base, but who spoke on condition of anonymity, said the insurgents stormed the 153 Task Force Battalion base on Sunday and opened fire on the troops. The terrorists later set the military base on fire.

The source said the attack, which took place at about 6 p.m. caught the troops unaware.

News of the capture of Marte broke as troops from the Multinational Joint Task Force (MNJTF) battled insurgents, mostly fighters of the Islamic State for West Africa Province (ISWAP), in Arege and Malkonory in the Lake Chad area, killing 20 insurgents.

"We engaged them in a fierce encounter for about an hour. Initially, we were about getting victorious over them, but they overpowered us, and all troops in the burning base were set asunder, with all of us fleeing in all directions in the bush," the source said.

However, efforts to get Army spokesman, Col. Sagir Musa, to give details of the clash were abortive as calls made to his telephone line were not answered.

But MNJTF spokesman, Col. Timothy Antigha, who gave an update on the killing of the insurgents, said the multinational troops killed over 20 terrorists operating around Arege, Malkonory and Tumbum Rego general area.

The clash between the multinational troops and ISWAP came just as the terrorist group, Antigha said gun trucks, arms and ammunition, as well as a Vehicle Borne Improvised Explosive Device, which was meant to disrupt troops advance, was also destroyed in the gun duel between the troops and the terrorists.

“Unfortunately, four personnel of the MNJTF were wounded during the fire-fight and have been evacuated for urgent medical attention.

“The MNJTF remains committed to delivering the mandate of the force and therefore, urges continuous support and solidarity of the good people of the Lake Chad Region,” he said.

Meanwhile, the police yesterday paraded 38 suspects some of whom specialised in transnational gun running, using a route spanning North Africa, Ghana, Burkina Faso, and ending up in Shaki town in Oyo State from where arms were moved across the country.

Parading the suspects in Abuja, Force Public Relations Officer, Mr. Frank Mba, a Deputy Commissioner of Police (DCP), said the gun running gang specialised in bringing arms into the country.

He said the arrested persons, comprising suspected kidnappers, armed robbers, and car snatchers, were picked up across the country by police special squads under the IG’s direct supervision as part of the renewed war against crime and criminalities.

Mba said the police recovered 6,000 live ammunition, 20 AK 47 rifles, 10 pistols, 11 weapons and four pump action rifles, all displayed at the SARS office in Abuja.

During an interview with journalists, one of the suspects, Ojomo Adebawale Gbenga, said he had been in the business of gun-running for 15 years.

He said he had been bringing in arms from Ghana in concealed boxes at the cost of N300,000 per box.

And as Muslims mark Eid-el-Fitri today, the Inspector General of Police, Mr. Mohammed Adamu, yesterday ordered commissioners of police in the 36 States and the Federal Capital City (FCT) to provide security in worship centres throughout the Sallah period.