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15 killed in fresh hostility in Plateau

Written by Isaac Shobayo and James Bwala
Tuesday, 16 August 2011

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suspected to be Fulani herdsmen, leading to the death of 15 people while another five were also killed in Jos North.

Consequently, Governor Jonah Jang has shelved a retreat for the newly appointed commissioners and other political office holders slated to commence in Obudu Cattle Ranch in Cross River State as a result of the incident.

Nigerian Tribune learnt that a band of Fulani herdsmen, numbering about 50, stormed Heipang village in Barakin-Ladi Local Government Area of the state in the early hours of Monday while the inhabitants were still sleeping and descended on them, using cudgels, guns and other weapons.

An eyewitness told Nigerian Tribune that before the villagers and people of neighbouring villages could mobilise to repel the attackers, they had wreaked havoc and killed seven people.

It was further learnt that the assailants, who ransacked the village for close to two hours, released several gunshots into the air to scare people and prevent a counter-attack before leaving the village through the nearby hills.

Nigerian Tribune further learnt that after the Heipang attack, the assailants also raided Korut village in District Foron and killed another three people.

Spokesman for the Special Task Force in charge of security in the state, Captain Charles Ekeocha, who confirmed the killings, said in the raid, a house belonging to one Mr Nnaji was attacked and seven members of his family were killed in a barbaric manner.

Captain Ekeocha further stated that men of the STF arrived at the affected village in time to repel the attack but were prevented by members of a vigilance group in the area, who opened fire on the troops, adding that in the retaliation, a member of the vigilance group with AK47 rifle and 30 rounds of 7.62mm ammunition was shot.

According to him, the vigilance group member later died on the way to the hospital and his remains were deposited in a mortuary at Jos University Teaching Hospital. He added that youths in the area had demonstrated,

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demanding the troops' withdrawal.

He stated that the protesting youth stoned men of the STF and also ransacked the soldiers' accommodation, adding that the troop had since withdrawn to Maraban-Jama'a to avoid more casualties.

However, following the gruesome killing of a commercial motorcyclist in Eto Baba area of Jos North Local Government area of the state on Sunday, Nigerian Tribune learnt that no fewer than five people were killed on Monday within the area in a reprisal attack.

The STF, in a statement, declared that three people had been arrested at Angwan Rukuba area of Jos North in connection with the killing and dumping of the corpses into the river, adding that the suspects confessed to the killing and were handed over to the police for investigation.

According to the statement, the youth of the area came together and demanded for the release of the suspects and, in the process, attacked three motorcyclists who were later rescued by men of the STF.

Meanwhile, business activities in Jos, on Monday, were at the lowest ebb, following demonstrations by some aggrieved youths both within and on the outskirts of Jos, while vehicles were prevented from coming into the state capital from Abuja.

Reacting to the development, the Special Adviser to the Governor on Media and Publicity, Mr Pam Ayuba, said the government was making efforts to unravel the brains behind the killings.

He said Governor Jonah Jang was "really pained" over the incident, adding that a security meeting was being convened, while its outcome would be made known after.

However, the state government has condemned the killing of 10 people in Barkin-Ladin Local Government Area of the state by people suspected to be Fulani herdsmen and directed the STF, the police and Operation Rainbow to investigate and bring those behind the act to justice.

According to a statement issued by the state government and signed by the

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Commissioner for Information and Communication, Mr Yiljap Abraham, the attacks were unacceptable.

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In another development, the police in Maiduguri, the Borno State capital, have killed a 25-year-old man who was trying to gain access to the police headquarters to blast it with explosives packed in a car, during the recruitment of 1,500 new officers of the force on Monday.

An eyewitness told the Nigerian Tribune that the man forcibly drove the car into the police headquarters, while the recruitment was ongoing.

HEALTH

According to him, “we did not know what he was carrying, but later we heard the gunshot, which terminated the life of the occupant of the car. We actually ran away. The real fear came when we heard that the occupant was a suicide bomber, who was trying to gain access to blast the whole police headquarters.”

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Confirming the incident, the state police commissioner, Mr Simeon Midenda, said guards killed the 25-year-old man, who was driving a Honda Accord saloon car, ash colour, with registration number AP 851 ABJ, loaded with seven gas cylinders and cans of gasoline and gunpowder, adding that he had knocked down policemen at the main gate and was heading towards the building.

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He said earlier threat text messages had been sent that members of the sect would attack the police headquarters during the screening of candidates who had applied for the cadet recruitment exercise.

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According to the CP, he directed that security be beefed up, not only at the command headquarters, but at all the police formations in the troubled city.

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