

## 16 killed as gunmen attack Yobe, Taraba, Borno •Burn 24 base stations of Airtel, Glo, Etisalat

Written by James Bwala and Chris Agbambu, with Agency Report  
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MD Abubakar, IGP

### •Attack corps members

### •IGP orders 24-hr surveillance

GUNMEN on Thursday unleashed mayhem on three northern states of Yobe, Taraba and Borno, killing 16 people and destroying several mobile communication masts at various base stations of Airtel, Glo and Etisalat in Potiskum and Damaturu with Improvised Explosive Devices (IEDs).

Among the 16 people killed was the Yobe State government protocol officer, Mallam Adamu, who was said to be returning from work at the Government House, Damaturu.

The attack on masts has now brought the number of destroyed masts to 24.

The attackers allegedly used IEDs and petrol-bombs to bring down the masts and GSM stations.

In Taraba, corps members were allegedly attacked behind the Federal Government Girls College in Jalingo, the Taraba State capital.

The gunmen were said to have stolen the monthly allowance of the corps members, which runs into thousands of naira.

The bandits stormed the house of the Redeemed Christian Corpers Fellowship (RCCF), held the corps members hostage for hours and took with them laptops and about 24 mobile handsets.

The gunmen gained entrance into the corps members lodge through a toilet in the female wing of the building.

One of the victims said: "We were about 20 corps members in the lodge when it happened and all our phones were taken away.

"Some of us had two, three phones. Also, our monthly feeding allowance, which we contributed, was also taken away by the evil men."

Another corps member, who did not want his name in print, said: "We were sleeping when some men came in holding all sorts of dangerous weapons but we never resisted them. We obeyed their orders, because we were in fear. They asked us for our states of origin and religion, threatening to behead us if we misbehaved."

The RCCF president, Banji Omogbehin, said the motive of the attack was unknown because the bandits asked for their states of origin, threatening to rape the ladies and behead them. Officials of the NYSC who visited the corps members said the issue would be seriously dealt with, as the scheme would not tolerate such act on its members.

The spokesperson for the Taraba State Police Command, Amos Olaoye, confirmed the attack.

Olaoye said: “I can confirm the attack but it is not robbery. We have not made any arrest yet but the police are investigating.

The case was reported at the GRA Police Division.

Nigerian Tribune gathered that in the early hours of Thursday, Damaturu, the Yobe State capital, was attacked again by gunmen who bombed the Ministry of Religious Affairs and the state’s Pilgrims Welfare Commission (YPWC) buildings located on Potiskum Road, with some people living near the building premises feared died.

Confirming the incident, the Yobe State Commissioner of Police, Patrick Egbuniwe, said two religious public buildings were torched in the wake of the violence at about 2.30 a.m., which lasted for hours.

He said: “Suspected gunmen used Improvised Explosive Devices (IEDs) and petrol bombs in setting the two buildings that house the Ministry of Religious Affairs and Yobe State Pilgrims Welfare Commission (YPWC) on Potiskum Road. Some of the armed hoodlums used tricycles to get access to the buildings, before setting them ablaze in the early hours of Thursday.”

According to the police boss, some people living near the buildings were killed. “The people killed by the suspects had been living near the two religious buildings before men of the Joint Task Force (JTF) rushed to the scenes to prevent further attacks and killings.”

On whether arrests were made, he said: “No. Not yet, the police have commenced investigations on the motives behind the Islamist sect’s targeting of religious buildings in addition to the torching of Global System of Mobile Communication (GSM) firms’ masts in five areas of Damaturu, the state capital.”

Meanwhile, following the new strategy adopted by gunmen to attack and destroy telecommunications equipment in the country, the Inspector General of Police, Mohammed Dahiru Abubakar, has ordered a 24-hour surveillance of all telecommunications equipment and installations across the country.

In this regard, he directed the setting up of special units consisting of counter-terrorism and mobile police personnel to be fully responsible for protection of the installations.

According to a statement signed by Force Spokesman, CSP Frank Mba: “This order is sequel to recent security development in some parts of the country, where these equipment and installations have become vulnerable and targets of reckless attacks and willful destruction.

“Consequently, the IGP has directed all state commissioners of police to constitute a special unit in their respective commands, whose primary assignment will be to ensure the safety of telecommunications equipment and installations within their areas of jurisdiction,” he said.

He directed the CPs to further ensure that Area Commanders and DPOs in their commands replicate the constitution of such special units in their respective areas to protect installations located within their territories.

State commissioners of police were also directed to ensure that personnel of the police mobile force (PMF) and Counter-Terrorism Squads in their commands were constructively involved in this crucial assignment.

Zonal Assistant Inspectors General of Police (AIGs) were also directed to supervise the activities of all such units constituted by commissioners of police, to ensure strict compliance with the directives of the IGP.

“They are to constitute similar units that will assist state commands within their zones. AIGs and CPs are to provide dedicated lines in their respective commands to enable public-spirited Nigerians who may have useful information to volunteer same to the police,” the statement said.

While assuring the public that the police would do everything within their powers to arrest this emerging security trend, the IGP appealed to members of the public to assist the force with vital information on the activities of these hoodlums.

He particularly enjoined traditional rulers, community leaders, religious leaders and parents to keep watchful eyes on their environments and to report any strange movements to the local police authorities.

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24