

Soldiers kill 25 fundamentalists in Kano

By Tina Anthony with
agency reports

KANO — SOLDIERS in Kano, yesterday, killed at least 25 members of the Islamic fundamentalist group believed to be responsible for Tuesday's attack on the Panshekaran police station in Kano in which 13 people, 12 of whom were policemen, were killed.

"I understand that our troops killed at least 25 members of the criminal group terrorising Kano. The operation to flush them out is still on," Colonel Ayo Olaniyan, army spokesman said.

Following Tuesday's attack by the fundamentalists, a combined police and army operation was mounted yesterday

to dislodge the militants from a waterworks complex, close to the Panshekaran police station.

The violence comes amid tensions over this weekend's presidential elections. Opposition parties are threatening to boycott the vote and say it should be cancelled, the national election commission disbanded and further elections postponed until "transparency and fairness" could be guaranteed.

Olaniyan gave no detail of any army casualties in yesterday's clash in Kano, but one eyewitness spoke of seeing the bodies of three soldiers and a reporter saw some 500 residents fleeing the area.

"The entire place is under the troops' bombardment. That is

why we had to flee," a resident said.

Tuesday's attack on the police station had prompted the authorities in Kano to impose a dusk-to-dawn curfew-ahead of this weekend's presidential election.

The city is a flashpoint for both religious and communal violence. Last Friday, assailants shot and killed a Muslim cleric and two of his followers in a mosque in Kano.

According to the police, the group involved in the latest violence is known locally as the "Taliban" because of its admiration for the former rulers of Afghanistan.

"This has nothing to do with politics. It is purely religious," Kano State police spokesman, Baba Mohamed,

said on Tuesday, adding that the same group was behind attacks in 2004 and 2005 in Yobe and Borno.

Sustained bursts of automatic gunfire were heard yesterday at a military checkpoint on the edge of the Panshekaran district, while a column of black smoke rose over the area.

Troops set up a cordon around the district, and officers in charge declined to comment officially. One officer at the scene said: "There are still pockets of fighters in there and we are not allowing anyone to enter."

Residents said the militants were avenging the assassination of a Muslim cleric in Kano on Friday, which they blamed

Continues on Page 15

Soldiers kill 25

Continues from Page 5

on the government. The State Police Commissioner has advised residents of the area to relocate to avoid being hit by stray bullets.

Before the reprisals, some military planes had flown over the hideout of the fundamentalists who opened fire on the planes. Ground soldiers returned fire killing the fundamentalists who appeared fully prepared. Witnesses said they had in their ranks teenagers and even women.