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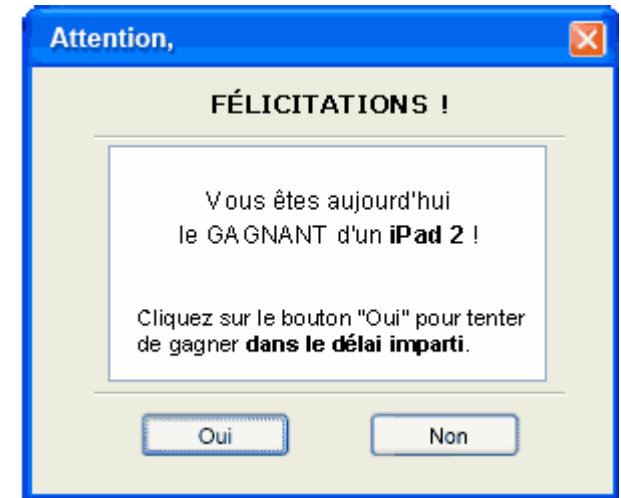
Ex-Borno Governor created Boko Haram –



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Gen Useni

on JULY 13, 2011 · in HEADLINES

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BY KINGSLEY OMONOBI, DANIEL IDONOR, NDAHI MARAMA, Oscarline Onwuemenyie & Fredrick Okopi
ABUJA- THE Chairman of the Arewa Consultative Forum, ACF, Lt. Gen. Jeremiah Useni (rtd) yesterday gave an insight into the emergence of the deadly Islamic sect, Boko Haram, saying that the group used to function as a political thuggery cell to a former governor of Borno State.

The retired army general who spoke with State House correspondents, after

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separate meetings with President Goodluck Jonathan and Vice President Namadi Sambo also supported the use of force by the Nigeria Army to flush out Boko Haram, saying that “like in war, the soldiers must be working on information on the Boko Haram. Innocent ones would definitely be killed in the process of trying to dislodge the Boko Haram members from their base”.

This is just as the leadership of the ACF called for the convocation of a Northern Peace Summit to discuss and proffer possible solution to the menace of the Islamic sect, currently ravaging the region.

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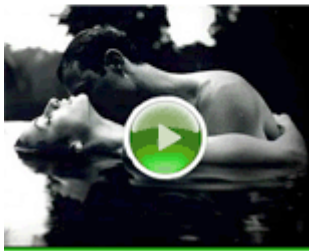
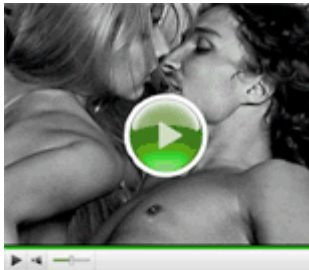
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President Goodluck Jonathan flanked by the Chairman Arewa Consultative Forum, Lt. Gen Jerry Useni and Vice President Namadi Sambo (2l) while others watched during a meeting with the Presidency and the Northern Leaders at the State House, Abuja. Photo by Abayomi Adeshida

Gen. Useni disclosed that he had earlier warned the former governor against the use of thugs during election, saying that like in Rivers state where thuggery gave birth to militancy, Boko Haram used to be a political thug group; but later metamorphosed into a terror entity.

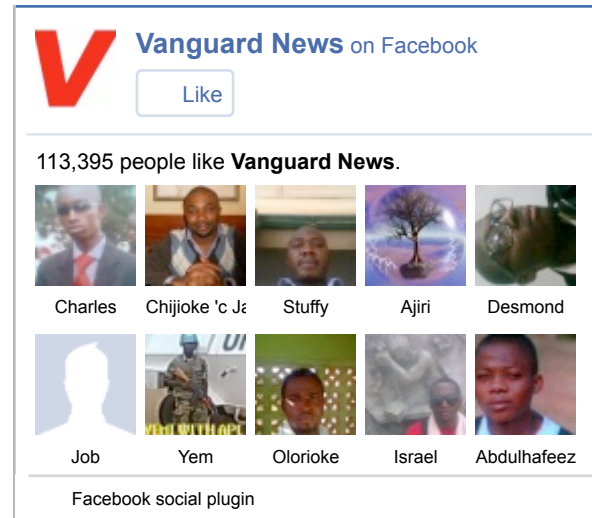


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National problem

His words: “Just like the Boko Haram issue, it started like a Borno affair but now it is becoming a national problem. I remember when I was the Deputy National Chairman of the ANPP, I went to the state (Borno) to commission some projects and when we were driving along one of the major streets, I saw young boys selling petrol in jerry cans and I asked him (the governor), why he allowed them to be selling on a major road like that, and he said, “no, no, leave them they are very useful, during the general elections, we can use them to turn everywhere.”



“So, it means they were used during the elections. So, that was how it all started. And if you remember, we had the same problem again in Rivers State where one of the former governors used thugs and at the end of it, they became militants. So, there is always reason for something”, he said.

The ACF, Chairman attributed the emergence of Boko Haram to bad leadership and political thuggery but suggested a summit, as a way out. He said: “There are lots of things responsible for all these and the best way is for us to sit down and tell ourselves the truth”.

According to him, it is for this reason that the ACF is organising Arewa Peace Conference in December this year; stressing that “all the governors will come so that we will sit and talk and our monitoring group will follow up”.

Legislative powers

He noted that “as an organisation, that is all we can do since we have no legislative powers. But for now, we are going to start something before the conference”, warning that “it is not enough to be issuing statements like ‘Boko Haram your days are numbered or Boko Haram you are this or that. We need to look at it in-depth” .

While blaming the Boko Haram saga on governments of the affected states who have resorted to thuggery as a means to winning elections, Gen. Useni believed that “good governance will reduce the menace. I mean good government at all levels” .

He observed that “no matter how good a government at the top is, some politicians at the state and local governments will abdicate their responsibilities and divert public funds meant for infrastructure development to fund their political ambition”.

Asked why they were in Aso Rock, the ACF boss said, “we are in the State

House to congratulate the President.

Since the elections, we have not come as a group to congratulate. We feel that we should come as a group to greet him and give him our respect”.

And on the issues discussed during the meetings, he disclosed that “in my speech, I touched on the issue of insecurity and that we as an organisation condemn violence in whatever form and our position is that we should always try to seek redress through normal processes”.

He added that “we just came out from the Vice President’s office where he told us all they are doing as a government to

redress the problem. We have agreed that there are Nigerians even within ACF that have been trained in security matters and we, as a group, will send a small team to come and discuss with him and find out the best we think can be done to handle the problem”.

Besides, he noted that the ACF abhors the use of violence in whatever form; saying, “we believe there are due processes through which we can voice our complaints. So, why should we kill to satisfy our grievances? So, the more we condemn this, the better for us; not for some people to go and sit-down and be saying ‘good for them”.

2 soldiers injured, 3 killed in Maiduguri blast

Meanwhile, Boko Haram members yesterday continued their reign of terror in Maiduguri as two bomb blasts by the sect members left two JTF members seriously injured while three of the sect members were killed by gunshots.

The first bomb attack occurred early morning yesterday along Baga Road, in Maiduguri while the second blast went off on the main road opposite the United Bank Of Africa (UBA) Baga Road branch, shattering the windscreen of the National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA) vehicle that was on its

way to rescue the victims of the first blast.

An occupant of the NEMA Vehicle, who is the Information Officer of the agency, Mr. Ibrahim Farinloye told our Correspondent on phone that, the second blast affected the windscreen of their vehicle. “We were rushing to Baga road after the early morning bomb blast to rescue the victims in the convoy of another JTF Patrol team, when another bomb which was targeted at the JTF vehicles that we were following exploded opposite UBA Bank. It destroyed our windscreen, but no one was injured.

Confirming the blasts, the Operation Officer of the JTF, Colonel Victor Ebhaleme told our correspondent on phone that, suspected members of the sect at about 7:30am threw a bomb at the Patrol vehicle of his men at Baga Road which injured two of the occupants, while the JTF was able to gun down three of the suspected bombers.

Colonel Victor, however, could not give further details of any arrest but it was gathered that, two other people were killed by stray bullets during the encounter. He said, the JTF had already cordoned off the area in order to fish out those behind the incidents.

Gov. Shettima begs residents not to flee

Meanwhile, Governor Kashim Shettima has expressed sympathy over the recent happenings in Maiduguri Metropolis and Jere Local Government area as a result of security measures aimed at curtailing incessant bomb attacks on innocent people in the state.

A statement which was signed by the Secretary to the State Government (SSG) Ambassador Baba Ahmed Jidda, urged the residents “not to panic or migrate from their houses as adequate measures have now been taken by government to ensure that security

operations would henceforth be undertaken with human face and with absolute respect for the freedom of movement and peaceful abode of all citizens within the urban centres of Maiduguri and Jere Local Government areas”.

The statement also re-assured the people of Borno that government is not unmindful of the current hardship being experienced as a result of the recent ban on Okada riders, saying that it will soon distribute tricycles and buses as palliative measures to ease the current situation.

Borno Elders call for immediate

withdrawal of JTF

In reaction to the killing of innocent citizens and the mass exodus of residents from Maiduguri, a Committee of Borno Elders and Leaders of Thought has called on President Goodluck Jonathan, to as a matter of urgency, withdraw all soldiers from the streets of Maiduguri, arguing that the soldiers have failed to address the security situation perpetrated by the Islamic Sect, Boko Haram, but rather, they have succeeded in burning down houses and cars, killing innocent people and harassing passers-by since their deployment to the state.

The Elders also called on the members of the Ahlan Sunnah Lid Da'waati wal Jihad Yaanaa (brothers), a.k.a Boko Haram to consider the current suffering of fellow Muslims and look for alternative ways of pursuing their demand, as government has on several occasions appealed to them to engage in honest and positive dialogue, since they have already presented their demands.

Reacting, the JTF in a statement signed by Colonel Victor Ebhaleme, the Operations Commander, debunked all the claims by the Borno Elders that soldiers are involved in any indiscriminate treatment of law-abiding

members of the public.

Colonel Ebhaleme stated that, the claims are baseless and uncalled for at a moment when the state is facing serious security challenges, and re-assured the general public that members of the JTF will never act in anyway against the peace of the state.

The JTF also blamed members of the outlawed Boko Haram for planting Improvised Explosive Devices (IED) at residential areas which explode and damage houses and vehicles as was the case in Kaleri London –Chiki area

The JTF, therefore, called on the general public to disregard the rumour

going round that people should leave the state capital, stressing that such rumour is baseless as there is no hiding place for members of the sect and their collaborators who resorted to spreading the rumour in order to instil fear in the people.

JTF however re-assured the public of their safety urging them to go about their normal businesses, as those leaving the town are motorcycle owners in search of livelihood as a result of ban by the state government.

FG to negotiate with aggrieved groups

The new Minister of Police Affairs, Navy

Capt. Caleb Olubolade, has expressed the desire by the Federal Government to negotiate with the militant Islamic sect, Boko Haram, in order to achieve lasting peace in the country.

Olubolade who spoke with newsmen yesterday at the hand-over ceremony to his successor, at FCT ministry, Oloye Olajumoke Akinjide, said “we will explore dialogue with any aggrieved persons so that peace will reign in Nigeria. If that fails, but we hope it does not, we will then consider alternative measures to guarantee peace in the nation. What matters is that Nigerians are able to enjoy peace wherever they live.”

He added that the Nigeria Police would be better motivated and equipped to do the job of providing security for the whole nation.

According to Olubolade, “We are confronted with enormous security challenges at this time, and it is something we must confront headlong. We cannot allow insecurity to take over the land.

“I am fully aware that I have a big job on my hands to improve the police force in the country to be better able to tackle crimes and other violent acts that disrupt peace and endanger lives of Nigerians, and I am confident that we can the job.”

Security of lives and property

The Police Affairs Minister stated that he was ready to work with the FCT administration to ensure security of lives and property, even as he urged the incoming Minister of State to also concentrate efforts in the development of the area councils within the Federal capital.

Meanwhile, the FCT Minister, Senator Bala Abdulkadir Mohammed, has assured that all stakeholders in the Abuja Project will be carried along in the development and administration of the Federal Capital Territory.

The FCT Minister gave this assurance

while receiving the new FCT Minister of State, Oloye Olajumoke Akinjide and bidding farewell to the out-going FCT Minister of State, Navy captain Caleb Olubade in his office in Area 11, Garki I District, Abuja.

The Minister restated that the business of developing the new Federal Capital Territory should be the concern of all Nigerians whether in government or not; saying that the redeployment of Navy Captain Olubolade to the Ministry of Police Affairs will boost the security arrangement of Abuja because he is a member of the big family.

Senator Mohammed noted that the

secret of the success and wonderful working relationship with the out-going Minister of State is because they collapsed individual personal interest for team work and national interest.

The Minister who extended hands of fellowship to the new FCT Minister of State, Oloye Olajumoke Akinjide said that exclusion creates suspicion.

Also speaking at the occasion, the new FCT Minister of State, Oloye Olajumoke Akinjide thanked President Jonathan for the appointment and promised to assist in making Abuja a home to all Nigerians and foreigners.

She pledged her loyalty to the

transformation agenda of President Goodluck Jonathan, even as she stressed that the vision of the FCT administration was to make Abuja not only the capital of Nigeria but that of the rest of Africa.

She said, “We have made great strides in the development of Abuja as the nation’s capital, but still more work needs to be done especially in the area councils to bring them up the speed with the development trends on the capital city.

“I believe strongly in team work, honesty, loyalty and patriotic service to this country. I also believe in leaving a

place better than you met it, bearing in mind that we are only but custodians of the various positions find ourselves, and we should use that to serve the people efficiently.”

The ceremony was attended by the FCT Permanent Secretary, Dr. Biodun Nathaniel Olorunfemi and the Permanent Secretary of Police Affairs Ministry, Alhaji Bukar Goni Aji as well as some Directors of the FCT Administration.

Sect members vow to attack army barracks

Boko Haram has, however, vowed to attack Army barracks and accused the

army of carrying out massacre and destruction of innocent people's property in Maiduguri.

The group in a statement signed by Abu Zaid and circulated to some newspaper offices in Maiduguri challenged the JTF members to relocate to their barracks and remove their families and see whether they would not be attacked.

Abu Zaid said: "If you have the capacity to fight us, return to your barracks, remove your children and wives and see if we will not confront you within hours."

The statement which was written in Hausa and Arabic languages alleged

that the recent indiscriminate attack on innocent people, and destruction of their property was a sign that “you are weak, ungodly and fearful.”

Zaid also described as an understatement, the statement credited to the Chief of Army Staff, General Azubuike Ihejirika calling Boko Haram members cowards.

He said: “We want to tell General Ihejirika that cowards don’t engage the military in a duel as we did in your barracks and on the streets of Maiduguri. But cowards are those who attack women, children in their sleep and who burn the innocent property. We

have attacked you in your barracks in the past and God willing we will do it again very soon.

“You attacked us, first, in Maiduguri and then in Bauchi where you killed innocent people who were holding nothing, and now you are busy killing the innocent persons in Maiduguri and destroying their property. If this is not cowardice, what else is?”

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