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Tue 18 Jun

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Herdsmen massacre 17, several hundreds flee homes in Benue

on JUNE 1, 2013 · in HEADLINES, TOP STORIES 12:51 am

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By Peter Duru; Makurdi, Kingsley Omonobi; Abuja, Ndahi Marama; Maiduguri, Chris Ochayi

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Despite efforts by security agencies to stem the recurrent invasion of parts of Benue state by armed Fulani herdsmen, **no fewer than 17 persons have been killed in Akough village in Guma local government area of the state by suspected Fulani mercenaries.**

The armed herdsmen also razed Akough market, where some persons were also killed.

Also some members of insurgent group, the Joint Task Force (JTF) handed over to Governor Kashim Shettima of Borno state, in a confessional statement said that they used to spy for the sect on the movement of the JTF and that were paid N5,000 after any successful operation yesterday.

Saturday Vanguard gathered from eyewitnesses that the armed attackers stormed **the village three days ago** at the early hours of the day, burning down houses and huts, leaving several persons dead while many others sustained varying degrees of injuries. The development has forced several hundreds of people to flee their homes for fear of being attacked in another onslaught.

Also, former Vice President, Alhaji Atiku Abubakar, yesterday, counselled the Federal Government that dialogue with the members of Boko Haram sect and other aggrieved elements in the country remains the only solution to resolving the current impasse.

Alhaji Abubakar who made this known at the Rotary International Conference, organized by District 9125-Nigeria, at the Yar'Adua Centre, Abuja, said, there was need to engage aggrieved groups in dialogue while taking decisive security measures to protect innocent people.

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*Cattle

Meanwhile, the intensive cordon and search operation being conducted on members of Boko Haram by the troops of the Special Forces received a major boost as the Defence headquarters announced yesterday that a group of terrorists moving from village to village in search of large quantity of food were tracked and apprehended at Daban Masara with weapons such as AK 47 rifle, single barrel shotgun, double hand shotgun and various calibres of ammunition recovered from them, following a tip-off from civilians.

The Defence Headquarters in its statement said: “The group which was moving around in a Toyota Land Cruiser Jeep with registration number Borno XA 428 ADM which is suspected to have been stolen. They were eventually arrested at Daban Masara with weapons such as AK 47 rifle, single barrel shotgun, double hand shotgun and various calibres of ammunition.

“In other locations, a total of 56 identified insurgents were apprehended with the help of Military Police dogs.

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Agent Robert

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Another teenager who also confessed said that he was given petrol and matches to burn schools and that after every operation, he was being paid N5,000, adding that when he was arrested, he revealed his sponsors to the JTF and they were promptly arrested.

“Items recovered from the arrested insurgents include, 7 packs of IEDs, 2 rocket propelled gun chargers, a rifle magazine, and 2 machetes.

“Others are bomb detonators, camouflage and other military uniforms as well as medicines, equipment, charms, 7 vehicles including a Jeep and 8 tri-cycles”.

68 Sect members released to Yobe, Borno govts

Again, as the campaign to rid the nation’s territories of the insurgents continues and in compliance with President Goodluck Jonathan’s directive on the immediate release of some members of insurgent group, the Joint Task Force (JTF) has handed over 20 pardoned sect members to Governor Kashim Shettima of Borno state, while 17 women and 21 children were handed over to Governor Ibrahim Gaidam of Yobe state yesterday.

The suspects who are made up of six women and 14 young men were handed over to Governor Shettima by the Commander 23 Armoured Brigade at the Government House Council Chambers, while 17 women and 21 children were handed over to Governor Gaidam at the Wawa Hall by the JTF Spokesman, Lieutenant Lazarus Eli respectively so that they will in turn be handed over to

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their families for rehabilitation and reintegration.

In his remarks shortly before the handover of the suspects, the spokesman of the JTF in Borno, Lt. Col Sagir Musa who accompanied the Brigade Commander said, “ on behalf of the Chief of Defence Staff, Admiral Saad Ibrahim we are handing over the six women and 14 children arrested by our men, so that they could be rehabilitated and reintegrated with their families and become useful members of the society”.

Responding, Governor Kashim Shettima said, “we most sincerely thank Mr. President for his magnanimity. This marks a milestone in our quest for peace and to restore normalcy to Borno state and the country at large”.

He commended the security operatives for keeping the detainees hail and hearty and promised that they will be rehabilitated and reintegrated back to the society, so that they may become good members of the society, adding that they will be trained in various vocational training centres to acquire skills while the young men will be sent to schools and the sum of ten thousand will be given to their parents if they agree to enroll them into schools.

The governor then urged them to be good citizens and not to retrace their steps into the Boko Haram sect, as no religion allows the killing of innocent citizens in the name of fighting the cause of Allah.

In a confessional statement, one of the released teenagers said that he used to spy for the sect on the movement of the JTF and that he was being paid N5,000 after any successful operation.

Another teenager who also confessed said that he was given petrol and matches to burn schools and that after every operation,he was



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being paid N5,000, adding that when he was arrested, he revealed his sponsors to the JTF and they were promptly arrested.

In the same vein, Gaidam promised to train the released suspects to acquire skills so that they will become useful citizens in the future.

Residents flee homes in Akough, Benue

Saturday Vanguard learnt that the attack on Akough village in Guma local government area has left several hundreds of people fleeing their homes.

According to our source, “the fulani herdsmen attacked the village at the bank of the River Benue which is bordering both Benue And Nasarawa states shooting sporadically and burning down houses and huts.

“From there, they moved to the Akor market which resulted into a stampede amidst confusion. They opened fire on those they found at the market, killing and maiming them.

“At the end of the operation which lasted close to nine hours, over 17 persons were killed while many sustained injuries.

“The heavily armed herdsmen did not stop there, they went further to set the market ablaze after which they retreated to their canoes and moved back to Nasarawa state.

“But as they left, they took some of the natives captive, and since then, they’ve been using the cellphone of the captives to communicate to the community, threatening to stage another round of bloody attack on the community in no distant time.

“As I speak with you, people are moving out from the community in

droves for fear of being caught in a fresh onslaught.

“At the moment, hundreds of people who are fleeing the besieged village have taken refuge in Gbajimba, the local government headquarters and the situation is a sorry sight,” he stated.

Attempts to reach the Guma local government council Chairman, Hon. Usa Adii failed but the Benue State Police Public Relations Officer, PPRO, Deputy Superintendent of Police, DSP, Daniel Ezeala, said the Police had beefed up security in the community adding however that the command had recorded only four deaths in the attack.

Atiku Abubakar advises FG

The former Vice President in his paper regretted that, “the economies of Borno, Yobe Plateau, Kaduna and, increasingly, Adamawa states have been badly hurt by this wave of insecurity.”

Enumerating the critical development challenges, which are currently facing the nation, Alhaji Abubakar said, “peace and security are needed for these to happen. That is why the government must do all that is necessary in a democratic society to protect lives and property. Thus, there is the need to engage aggrieved groups in dialogue while taking decisive security measures to protect innocent people. I hope that the current emergency rule in Borno, Yobe and Adamawa states does not obviate the urgent need for such dialogue in that zone and elsewhere.

According to him, “our country is obviously going through very serious challenges, including the challenge of providing adequate security, reducing conflicts, narrowing the infrastructure deficit, providing gainful employment especially for the youth, and

rebuilding our educational system.

“Many diseases continue to ravage our people, including malaria, measles and polio. We also rank very poorly in various indices of development such as poverty rate, life expectancy, infant and maternal mortality, and literacy rate.

“These challenges have excised the minds of many Nigerians, including political and civic leaders. Most alarming to Nigerians in recent times has been the rising wave of insecurity of life and property as well as wanton violence across the country.

“Hardly a day goes by without news of fresh slaughter of fellow citizens in one part of the country or the other. We have violent insurgents, armed robbers and kidnappers. Specifically, there are violent insurgencies in the North, particularly the North East as well as in the South of the country. Violent militancy is also once more rearing its head in the South-South. Kidnappings in the South-East and South-South have become all too common and are increasingly spreading to other parts of the South, especially Lagos.

“We also have violent struggles between Muslims and Christians, herdsmen and farmers. The words “indigene” and “settler” continue to be used as exclusionary tools in the struggle for scarce resources. Even security operatives, sent to protect innocent civilians, have been accused of atrocities against those same civilians. It is as if we have lost our souls.

“The economies of Borno, Yobe Plateau, Kaduna and, increasingly, Adamawa states have been badly hurt by this wave of insecurity. The South East elite is increasingly in internal exile in Abuja, Lagos and other cities, a major blow to the rural communities and families

that rely on the financial and organizational resources of this elite

“Whatever the immediate causes of these conflicts and insecurity, there is no doubt that the high level of unemployment, poverty and accompanying alienation, especially of our young people, have provided veritable recruiting grounds for these insurgencies and other forms of criminality. And these are taking place within the context of a collapsed educational system, poor investment climate, less than mediocre governance and increasing corruption.” he stated.



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