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## 74 killed in fresh Benue, Borno mayhem

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MAKURDI —IT was another day of bloodshed, yesterday, as 74 persons, including five policemen, were killed in separate incidents in Benue and Borno states even as Governor Gabriel Suswam of Benue State has called for military assistance to check the killings.

There was tension in Makurdi, the Benue State capital, yesterday, following the alleged killing of no fewer than 63 persons at Tse-Agena, Mbalom district, Ikpayonge and Adeka market, Oweto in Gwer and Agatu local government areas by suspected Fulani mercenaries.

This came as Defence minister, Lt. Gen. Aliyu Gusau, lauded the armed forces and attributed their successes to the new found synergy and cordial relationship existing among the Nigerian Army, Navy and the Airforce.



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The latest attack came on the heels of weekend's bloody fight between Tiv youths and the suspected mercenaries which claimed 55 lives in Guma local government area of the state.

The member representing Agatu in the State House of Assembly, Mr. Audu Sule told newsmen, yesterday, that three

persons were killed at the Adeka market, Monday morning, when suspected mercenaries stormed the community on the busy market day, shooting sporadically after which they fled the scene.

He said, "After the attack, three persons were left dead in the market but the attackers fled the scene thereafter."

Vanguard also gathered from an eyewitness that suspected herders stormed Tse-Tse-Agena during the wee hours of Tuesday when their victims were deep asleep, burning houses, killing and maiming anything in sight.

### **Herdsmen launch attack at 4 a.m**

The eyewitness said, "they came in around 4am when the people were still asleep and unprepared for the attack. Everyone was woken up by the barrage of gunfire, the wailing of women and children who were running frantically for safety in the mist of the confusion.

"The painful part of this attack is that communities in Gwer have had no prior incidents with the herders; that is why we all believe this is a premeditated attack. This carnage must not be allowed to continue; over 60 bodies have been removed from that village and the search for several missing persons is still ongoing. We earnestly want the state and federal governments to act fast before these mercenaries encircle the state capital."

At the time of this report, several police Hilux vans and ambulances were seen conveying recovered bodies of the victims of the attacks to the morgue of the Makurdi Federal Medical Centre where the police have had to contend with the angry crowd that had besieged the hospital.

When contacted, the Benue State Police Public Relations Officer, PPRO, Superintendent Daniel Ezeala, confirmed the attack adding that the command had recovered and deposited some corpses at the Makurdi Federal Medical Centre.

Meantime, two suicide attacks in Maiduguri, the Borno State capital, yesterday, also killed twelve people including five policemen.

### **Suicide bombers kill 5 policemen, civilians in Maiduguri**

Three suspected suicide bombers in a Volkswagen Golf saloon car rammed into a patrol vehicle belonging to a police team in Maiduguri, killing five policemen in the vehicle with several other civilians injured.

Earlier, *Vanguard* gathered that another suicide bomber who was on his way to Maiduguri from the Sambisa Forest in another Volkswagen Golf saloon car loaded with IEDs, allegedly detonated explosives around Government Farms, about 20 kilometres from Maiduguri killing three civilians and the occupant of the vehicle.

The three suicide bombers rammed into the police patrol vehicle near Dalori Housing Estate killing five policemen, after discovering that the security checkpoints along the Maiduguri- Bama highway could not guarantee them entry to Maiduguri town to accomplish their mission.

The incidents reportedly occurred simultaneously at about 9 am, a situation that caused pandemonium, as residents of Maiduguri metropolis scampered for safety, even as parents and guardians rushed to schools to evacuate their wards for fear of further attacks.

Sources said soon after the blasts, men of the 7 Division, Nigerian Army, a combined team of mobile policemen and

vigilante youths a.k.a Civilian JTF mobilized to the scene of the blasts and cordoned off the area to prevent further attacks. This followed unconfirmed reports that several terrorists had fled their camps in the Sambisa Forest and were infiltrating into Maiduguri and its environs.

The Police Public Relations Officer, PPRO, DSP Gideon Jubrin confirmed the incident on the telephone, pointing out that five policemen attached to the federal highway patrol team, three civilians and all the suicide bombers died during the incident.

Gideon said, “Yes, there was an early morning twin-blasts suspected to have been carried out by suicide bombers who rammed into one of our patrol vehicles around Dalori Housing Estate, a situation that led to the killing of five policemen including three suicide bombers.

He, however, said that the command had dispatched its men to the scene to investigate the matter with a view to preventing further attacks or killings on the highway.

Meanwhile, Governor Gabriel Suswam of Benue State, yesterday, appealed to the military to assist the state government in tackling the increasing wave of attacks on communities in the state by suspected Fulani herdsmen.

Suswam made the appeal during the ninth matriculation of students of the Nigerian Army Institute of Technology and Environmental Studies, NAITES, held at the Nigerian Army School of Military Engineering, NASME, Makurdi, the state capital.

The governor who was represented on the occasion by the Head of Service, Mr. Terna Ahua, however, said the state government, in collaboration with other security agencies had been taking proactive measures to check the unending crisis.

He said, “It is, therefore, pertinent to appeal to the Army formations in the state to continue to collaborate with the state government to address these security challenges. And unless we act promptly, we may lose impetus and erode the public confidence and trust of the citizenry about our commitment to the safety of lives and property.”

### **Gusau congratulates armed forces**

Meanwhile, Defence minister, Lt. General Aliyu Gusau, has saluted the new found synergy and cordial relationship existing among the Nigerian Army, the Navy and the Air Force saying it has resulted in the landmark successes recorded in the fight by security agencies against the terrorists.

He spoke at the headquarters of the Nigerian Air Force, yesterday, during his maiden visit to the Chief of Defence Staff, Air Chief Marshal Alex Badeh, Chief of Army Staff, Lt. General KTJ Minimah and the Chief of Air Staff, Air Marshal Adesola Amosu.

Gusau said, “I must congratulate the officers and men of the armed services especially the military for the cordial relationship existing between the Army and the Air force in the North East where the insurgency is being checkmated. I want to also congratulate the Nigerian Air Force and the Navy and Army for the synergy and dedication with which they are tackling the oil theft and bunkering in the Niger Delta.”

“I urge you all not to relent in your efforts towards ensuring security challenges and other crimes including kidnapping and violent robberies are brought to an end. On our part, we have been briefed of the requirements needed to boost your

operational capabilities and I assure you they will be passed to Mr. President”.

Chief of Defence Staff, Air Chief Marshal Alex Badeh in his address, expressed joy at the cooperation existing among the service chiefs noting that there was mutual trust towards eliminating the security challenges confronting the country.

He said, “if the Nigerian Air Force is not there, supporting the Army with surveillance and aerial attacks, it would have been difficult. No single service can do it alone. There should be no rivalry because we are all working for the national interest.”

The Chief of Air Staff, Air Marshal Adesola Amosu said the present state of battle against Boko Haram is aimed at stabilizing the situation in the north East. He noted, “The efforts are yielding result. We (NAF) are providing airlift for our ground forces. We are providing aerial surveillance and giving intelligence through the use of air power towards the success of the operation which is not far away.

“But as soon as we stabilize the situation in the North East, I want to inform the minister and the nation that we will need double the resources we are currently getting to get them (insurgents) out of our country and remain there. We won’t like to have the Afghanistan experience where after they were subdued, they were allowed to come back and grow more deadly and bigger. Another thing is that Nigerians must know that fighting terrorism is not only for the security forces. We all should play our roles”, Amosu said.

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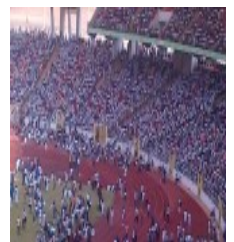
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