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15 civilians killed in Borno 'suicide attack'

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...Boko Haram insurgents lunatics, not Muslims — Shettima

BY KINGSLEY OMONOBI & NDAHI MARAMA

MAIDUGURI—Boko Haram terrorists yesterday launched a suicide attack in Mole area of Maiduguri, Borno State capital, killing 15 civilians and destroying eight vehicles in the process. Defence spokesman, Major General Chris Olukolade, who confirmed the attack said 17 other were injured and that one of the victims was a member of a civilian vigilante group.

According to him, "Six of the terrorists died while one has been arrested," he added in a statement.

Meanwhile, Borno State governor, Kashim Shettima yesterday described the Boko Haram insurgents as lunatics who were crusading for the spread of Islam.

"We are presently in a day where some lunatics claiming to be crusaders of Islam are killing innocent people, burning mosques and Churches. It is bad interpretation of the holy Quoran by the insurgents that caused all these," Shettima said in Maiduguri while receiving winners and officials of the board for Qur'anic Education who represented the state during the national Qur'anic Recitation Competition held in Dutse, Jigawa State.

The Defence Headquarters said that four suicide bombers in IED laden cars heading for the Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation, NNPC, facility along Maiduguri-Damboa road died while five soldiers were injured from explosion following a shoot-out between security operatives and members of the Boko Haram.

A statement signed by the Director of Defence Information, Major General Chris Olukolade also said that "over 288 rifles and 35 Rocket Propelled Guns as well as 35 locally made IEDs were recovered after a fierce encounter at Abugasse, Cameroon, close to the Chadian border."

However, Shettima who donated N10 million to the participants congratulated them for the successes recorded in the competition, asking them not to relent in their efforts.

He strongly condemned the activities of the Boko Haram, saying their violent campaigns which had led to the death of innocent persons and the destruction of properties, lacked explanation in Islam.

The governor further noted that the insurgents interpreted Islam and the Holy Qur'an negatively, pointing out that they also used such wrong interpretations as reasons to unleash terror on the citizens.

He explained that Islam was a religion of peace which did not condone killings and destructions under whatever guise.

"Distorted translation of the Holy Book by the insurgents landed us in this mess. If we have had good understanding of Islam, we would have been in a better place. There is no room for extremism in Islam. We need to go back to Islam as practised by Prophet Muhammed, when Islam encouraged Muslims, Jews and Christians to live in peace with one another," he added.

About a week ago, two suicide bombers rammed their Volkswagen Golf car into a police patrol vehicle, killing five policemen, three civilians and themselves around the Dalori Housing Estate at Mole.

Mole is a suburb, along the Maiduguri – Biu road and about 10 kilometres drive to Maiduguri, the epicentre of Boko Haram sect activities.

Vanguard sources said that the suicide bombers who arrived in two Gulf cars at about 1pm rammed into the military patrol vehicles at their checkpoints in Mole village which exploded leaving many villagers in the area scampering for safety.

The Police Commissioner, Mr. Lawal Tanko in a telephone chat with newsmen said, he heard of the explosions around Maiduguri metropolis, in which he had already sent men of the anti – bomb squad to the area to ascertain the reason behind the blasts, even as he said, he is yet to get details on the number of casualties.

Meanwhile, Olukolade said in the statement that following collaborative efforts between the Nigerian military and Cameroonian authorities in the fight against Boko Haram terrorism in the sub-region a large cache of arms and ammunition including 288 AK 47 rifles, 35 Rocket Propelled Guns and 35 locally made IEDs had been captured from the group.

Olukolade stressed that the huge seizure of arms apparently meant for use by terrorists operating in the country was made weekend even as four terrorists died in their IED laden vehicles.

According to him, other weapons recovered included pistols, mortar bombs; sub-machine guns and various calibres of ammunitions following the arrest of two suspects believed to be major arms suppliers to the terrorists.

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