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## 5 soldiers, scores of terrorists killed in Boko Haram ambush

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As FG orders new fighter jets, helicopter gunships

Army debunks rumour of ethnic cleansing

BY KINGSLEY OMONOBI

ABUJA—Following continued air and land strikes on Boko Haram terrorists in the hills and forests of the North-East, an officer of the Nigerian Army and four soldiers have been killed in an ambush by the terrorists, while scores of the sect members were killed in the shootout that ensued.



<http://dvs13w2q45hb8.cloudfront.net/wp-content/uploads/2013/03/boko-haram-3.jpg>

A picture taken from a video distributed to journalists in recent days through intermediaries and obtained by AFP on March 5, 2013 reportedly shows Abubakar Shekau (C), the suspected leader of Nigerian Islamist extremist group Boko Haram, flanked by six armed and hooded fighters in an undisclosed place.

The death of the soldiers came just as a distress call from indigenes indicating a planned attack, saved some communities around the Lake Chad Basin from being over run by the terrorists.

A statement by the Director of Defence Information, Major-General Chris Olukolade, said: “A timely distress call has saved communities besieged by the terrorists in search of food around the Lake Chad area.

“The terrorists, who were said to be heavily armed, scampered for safety on sensing the approach of troops. The troops of the Multi National Joint Task Force on patrol of the area have so far recovered

some arms and ammunition left behind by fleeing terrorists.

“Cordon and search of the area is continuing with a view to apprehending any of the terrorists that could be lurking around.

“Meanwhile, the assault on terrorists’ enclaves in Sambisa forests and surrounding locations is continuing. Operational activities around Wala, Gwoza, Pulka and environs have been intensified.

“Encounters resulting from air and land strikes and an ambush of troops on patrols in the area have resulted in the death of scores of terrorists and loss of five soldiers, including an officer.”

#### North-East before 2015 elections

Meanwhile, Chief of Air Staff, Air Marshal Adesola Amosu, declared yesterday that the military and other security agencies will stabilise the security situation in the North-East of the country before the 2015 elections.

Amosu, who was briefing the media on the activities lined up to mark the NAF 50th anniversary, however, said it was difficult to put a time frame as to when the insurgency and terrorism in the North-East can be brought to an end.

He disclosed that a major event planned to mark the golden jubilee, which is the biennial air expo scheduled for Kaduna this month, had been postponed to enable the Air Force focus on eliminating insurgency, terrorism, oil theft and securing the nation’s borders.

He said: “You are all aware that our nation is no doubt facing unprecedented security challenges, although, they are by no means insurmountable. The Nigerian Air Force has been active and in the fore front of the fight against insurgency

“As a result, NAF assets and personnel are currently fully deployed in the North-East to counter the terrorists’ insurgency.

“Similarly, a percentage of Nigerian Air Force assets are involved with the Joint Task Force in the Niger Delta to stem illegal maritime activities and recently, we are involved in security activities, aerial surveillance and intelligence regarding herdsmen/farmers killings in the North Central.”

#### Main challenge, state of emergency

On the war proper, Amosu said: “The main challenge we are facing in the North-East is that of the citizens not giving us information.

“This is a war that all Nigerians must partake in, not necessarily by taking part in the fight but by getting us timely information. With information we can overcome the challenge in a short space of time.”

Reminded that the state of emergency declared by President Jonathan will end by this April and that some elders from the area are calling for the military to pull out then, the Air Chief said, “you have to take many variables into consideration.

“In fighting terrorism, you consider the counter aspect, the anti-aspect, the political intervention aspect and the economic situational aspect.”

On the recent attack on the NAF base in Maiduguri and destruction of its aircraft, Amosu said the Air Force was in a position to strike at the terrorists during that attack but held back because of the colossal damage it would have done to

the Maiduguri metropolis.

On the North Central attacks, he said “we are already involved in Benue and around the North Central. We have sufficient intelligence to ensure that peace is restored.”

Throwing light on allegations that foreign aircraft were seen flying into the North East dropping weapons and other logistics for the insurgents, Amosu said the allegation was being investigated, adding “our pilots do not sleep. They work round the clock, particularly because of the surveillance aspect.”

#### New fighter jets

The Federal Government has placed orders for the acquisition of new fighter and surveillance aircraft for the Nigerian Air Force to enhance the war against terrorism and insurgency in the North-East and the deadly attacks of Fulani herdsman in the North Central area.

Chief of Air Staff, Amosu, who made the disclosure during his briefing, noted that because of the huge responsibility of also monitoring the nation’s borders through air surveillance, a Forward Operations Base has been established in Sokoto, which will entail the use of more aircraft.

Aside the fighter and surveillance aircraft, Vanguard gathered that more Helicopter Gunships, like the Mi 35, will be acquired because of its precision and accuracy in identifying and taking out enemies.

#### ‘Religious, ethnic sentiments’

Defence headquarters, DHQ, has debunked the accusation by leading Islamic religious body, Jama’atul Nasril Islamiya, that the resolve by the Nigerian military and security agencies to rid the North-East of Boko Haram terrorists and other parts of the North of killers in the form of herdsmen and other armed gangs, was a form ethnic cleansing against Muslims.

According to DHQ, the Nigerian military has never waged any battle on the basis of religion or ethnicity, but against those bent on scuttling the peace and stability of the nation, adding that there was no policy or agenda to carry out massacre or extra judicial killing of law-abiding citizens.

A statement by the Director of Defence Information, Major General Chris Olukolade, reads: “The statement issued by the Secretary General of Jama’atul Nasril Islam, JNI, Dr. Khalid Abubakar Aliyu, alleging extra judicial killing of Muslims and people of Fulani ethnic group by the Nigerian military is spurious and inflammatory.

“Much as the military is reluctant to join issues with a respectable religious organisation like JNI, the need to set the records straight makes this response imperative.

“The Nigerian military remains non partisan, non sectarian and will continue to be the symbol of patriotism and a unifying factor in the face of threats to national sovereignty.

“If this wild allegation was meant to cause disaffection or brew disharmony within the military, then it has woefully failed as the Nigerian military does not operate along religious or ethnic lines.”

#### We ‘ll restore sanity— Jonathan

President Goodluck Jonathan, yesterday, expressed confidence that despite the escalation in terrorism attacks and the new challenge of herdsman/farmers clashes, his administration will restore sanity soon.

Speaking at the commissioning of the Nigerian Police International Peacekeeping Training Centre and the Police Museum at force headquarters, Jonathan said “though terrorism activities are inimical to the development of the country, we would stop at nothing to combat the menace.”

He said that the Police, as the lead security agency in a democracy, have a cardinal role to play in containing internal security.

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