

News

Boko Haram captures another border town, Banki, in Borno

...Bama: Governor Shettima cuts official trip to Sudan, UK
...Nigeria, allies seek help to stop sect's funding, arming

By Ndahi Marama

M AIDUGURI— TWENTY four hours after Boko Haram insurgents attacked Bama town in Borno state, the sect members yesterday, in a convoy of Toyota Hilux vehicles and motorcycles over-ran another border town of Banki, after killing unconfirmed number of residents, as others fled to Cameroon.

According to a resident, Ibrahim Musa, in a telephone interview from Cameroonian border village yesterday, the Nigerian Custom Services, NCS, Nigerian Immigration Services, NIS, military and police posts at Banki border areas were deserted by security personnel manning them, two hours after the attack on Tuesday night.

"As members of the security agencies in this border town fled by noon Tuesday, we had to flee too because the insurgents have taken over all the major military and security posts at the border with Cameroon," said Musa, who added that about 75 per cent of the affected residents, including security operatives have also fled to Cameroonian town of Amchide for safety.

He said: "Six hours after we reached this border village in Cameroon, one of our neighbours that remained in Banki called me and said the gunmen have taken over the town by preaching to people after hoisting their black and white flags at the market square and central mosque, near the police outpost.

"The insurgents were asking the youths in Banki not to fear, but to cooperate, so that they could join the Boko Haram sect to fight both Cameroonian and Nigerian soldiers in the border areas. They went about preaching in the whole town, asking people to leave government work and join them to do the work of Allah. People were afraid, but they said that they did not come to kill anybody but to preach".

Other sources also told Vanguard yesterday that the "insurgents are on a continuous rampage, attacking border towns and villages with Chad and Cameroon to conscript more members into the sect. The insurgents don't stay in one town or village after



PRESIDENT JONATHAN'S RETURN: President Goodluck Jonathan arriving the Nnamdi Azikiwe's Airport, Abuja, on his return from African Union, AU, Peace and Security Summit on Terrorism held at the Kenyatta International Conference Centre, Nairobi, Kenya, yesterday. Photo by Abayomi Adeshida.

attacks, but continue to move from one settlement to another in search of more members to join them (Boko Haram) in Borno, Yobe and Adamawa states."

Meanwhile, contrary to reports that Boko Haram had taken control of Bama town following an attack Monday, indications have emerged that the military were still in control of the barracks.

Investigations carried out by Vanguard through phone calls to some of the actors on ground revealed that though there were casualties on the side of the military forces in the barracks and other locations, the army actually succeeded in repelling the terrorists.

It was however confirmed that a Nigerian Air force fighter jet, which intervened during the attack on Bama actually dropped a bomb in the barracks owing to information that many of the Boko Haram insurgents who were disguising as civilians, had infiltrated the barracks.

A source in Bama revealed that some civilians, as well as soldiers whose figure cannot be ascertained, died in the bombing of the barracks, adding however that it was due to a communication break between pilots of the aircraft and commanders on the ground.

Vanguard was told that while some people were mourning the death of their

colleagues in the battle, others were elated that the combined efforts of the troops and the airforce successfully prevented Boko Haram from taking over Bama.

It will be recalled that following Monday's attack, about 70 of the insurgents were killed before another group regrouped to continue the battle.

It was however gathered that reinforcements were sent to Bama from the 7 division headquarters while troops are on red alert for any further aggression from the insurgents.

A senior military officer, who spoke to Vanguard on condition of anonymity corroborated the information, noting that there was a serious campaign of falsehood going on against the military.

"Most of the information coming out is unsubstantiated. They are meant to deceive the people. People should not just succumb to such propaganda", he said.

Nigeria, allies call for help to stop Boko Haram funding, arming

Also, Nigeria and its regional allies yesterday called for greater international support to shut down Boko Haram's weapons and funding supply. The call came following reports that the militants had seized another

town, prompting warnings that Nigeria was losing control of the northeast and violence could spill across borders.

Nigeria's Foreign Minister, Aminu Wali said his counterparts from Benin, Chad, Cameroon and Niger recognised the need for a more combined approach to curb arms trafficking and spiralling violence during days of talks on the security crisis.

"The meeting called for greater co-operation of the international community to assist in tracking these sources with a view to putting an end to these practices and all forms of illegal transfer of arms and ammunition," he told reporters in Abuja.

Bama: Shettima cuts short official trip to Sudan, UK

Following the renewed attacks by Boko Haram insurgents in some parts of Borno State, Governor, Kashim Shettima abruptly returned to Nigeria yesterday, cutting short his official trip to Sudan and the United Kingdom.

Shettima immediately held crucial meetings in Abuja in connection with happenings in Bama and the rest of the state. He also approved the release of funds to a committee set up to coordinate distribution of relief and management of victims.

Nigeria ranked 127 out of 144 in global competitiveness

By Omoh Gabriel, Business Editor

THE World Economic Forum, WEF, yesterday released the 2015 Global Competitiveness Index, GCI rankings, in which Nigeria ranked 127 of the 144 countries assessed.

In a sharp and strongly-worded reaction to the ranking, the National Competitiveness Council of Nigeria, NCCN, said it recognises the fundamental importance of continuing in its mission to improve Nigeria's international competitiveness and address constructive portions highlighted in the ranking Index.

It contended that it is increasingly clear that a perception gap exists between the way some ranking agencies view Nigeria and the reality on the ground of steadily improving trends. The NCCN also said it has begun to take steps to redress this misalignment between perception and reality both internally and externally.

It said Nigeria's foreign direct investment, FDI, remains the largest in Africa, stating that a recent Wall Street Journal list of multinational CEOs ranked Nigeria first among emerging market investment destinations.

The country also outperformed peers like South Africa and Ghana in macroeconomic stability reflected in stable exchange rates, single digit inflation, fiscal restraint, low debt levels and lower poverty levels.

The Forum report titled: Global Competitiveness 2014-2015, said the health of the global economy is at risk, despite years of bold monetary policy, as countries struggle to implement structural reforms necessary to help economies grow.

In its annual assessment of the factors driving countries' productivity and prosperity, the report identifies uneven implementation of structural reforms across different regions and levels of development as the biggest challenge to sustaining global growth.