

VANGUARD

Nigeria: 100 Killed As Boko Haram Hits Yobe, Borno

MAIDUGURI--Suspected Boko Haram insurgents, yesterday, intensified terrorist activities, targeting two state capitals in the North-Eastern part of the ordinated bomb explosions in Maiduguri, Borno State capital and gun attacks in Damaturu, Yobe State capital.

More than 100 persons were feared dead in the attacks as several places, including police formations, were burnt. Damaturu is 135 km west of Maiduguri. Umar Sada, who lives in the Gujba Road area of the city, said the latest raid happened at about 4:45 a.m (0345 GMT).

In Damaturu, residents in the Gujba Road area of the city were jolted out of bed by the sound of gunshots and explosions at about 4:45 am as many fled. Sada said: "I was woken by huge blasts and the sound of heavy gunfire around the Mobile Police barracks. The gunmen came in numbers. They burnt barracks. They are now advancing towards two housing estates. We have left our home. We are now in the bush. We don't know what's going to happen."

Another local resident, a government official who asked not to be identified, said: "It's chaos all over the town. All I can hear are explosions and gunfire. I couldn't go out for morning prayers because this started before dawn and I'm afraid to leave in case I get caught up in it."

There was no immediate comment from the military in Damaturu, where government troops were also stationed, nor from Abuja, although Air Force jets were overhead.

But the Yobe State Police Commissioner, Marcus Danladi, said they were dealing with a "serious situation". Vigilantes in the city claimed that more than 100 Boko Haram fighters were killed.

A staff of the Federal Polytechnic, Damaturu said the fighting was still raging by mid-morning and some shells had landed in the school compound.

Other residents said fighting was taking place near detention facilities where Boko Haram suspects were being held near the state governor's residence. They were bombarding the militants.

The fresh attacks in Damaturu were targeted at Police and military formations as well as selected houses, a situation that sources said left many people displaced.

Police mobile base attacked

A reliable source told Vanguard that "the Police Mobile Base in Damaturu was one of the security formations that came under attack by insurgents. As you can see, we are in serious confusion now, gunshots and explosions were everywhere especially from the southern part of the city and people are fleeing," said an embattled resident, Mallam Usmanu Iliya.

Another resident who did not want his name mentioned in print for security reasons said he was woken up by the gunshots and blasts which started at about 4:45 am.

Another resident who could barely speak as he was panting simply told Vanguard that "We are running for our lives... we are under attack... . We don't know where to hide, the shooting is all over... ."

Although, at press time, the attacks and confrontations by security operatives in Damaturu were still on, the actual casualty figure was yet to be ascertained.

Buba Umar, who left the town for Maiduguri, said the militants attacked the police station armed with assault rifles and petrol bombs.

Another resident, Manassa Samuel said: "While some of the terrorists stormed the palace, others destroyed all the churches in the town. They also destroyed shops."

"Most of us fled to the bushes, leaving only women and children at home. The good news is nobody was killed," he said.

Borno State police spokesman, Gideon Jibrin confirmed the attack and said an investigation had been launched.

Jibrin initially said that more than 10 people were killed and many more injured, but he later changed the toll.

"The casualty figure is five dead and not as earlier sent," he said in a text message.

A previous text said that two female suicide bombers detonated their explosives in two different areas of the market, after initial reports of a single militant and two blasts.

One rescue official also said that five people had died and 47 were injured.

But one witness at the scene, Goni Abba, said he counted "10 dead bodies".

Meanwhile the Defence headquarters in a tweet posted on its handle said the Nigerian troops while carrying out the onslaught, ensured that innocent citizens were spared the agony of collateral damage.

DHQ said the first approach troops applied in the reprisal attack on the terrorists, was to secure the civil population while repelling or apprehending the terrorists. The tweets read: "Troops backed by the Airforce are carefully engaging terrorists who attacked the town in the early hours of today (yesterday).

"The approach is to secure the civilian population while repelling or apprehending the terrorists."

Attack barbaric, heinous -- Yobe Gov

Yobe State Governor, Ibrahim Gaidam, in a statement signed by his Special Adviser on Press Affairs and Information, Abdullahi Bego condemned the heinous and barbaric and "expressed appreciation to the security forces who worked very hard on the ground and from the air to repel the attack and force the attackers to flee. As a result of their effort, Damaturu remains firmly under government control."

According to the statement, "the governor has also been told that the security effort is still ongoing. Security agents will continue to track and pursue the attackers who might still be hiding in town. The governor urges people in Damaturu and all across the State to continue to remain vigilant and pray for Allah for His intervention.

"While commending the security forces for their work in repelling the attack, the governor also called on them to remain at their highest alert level and work to its logical conclusion. The governor has directed hospital authorities to provide adequate support to innocent victims of the attack who visit hospitals for attention."

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