

## Nigeria: 50 Female Suicide Bombers on the Prowl



Photo: Hamza Idris/Daily Trust

An explosion at Maiduguri Market (file photo).

By Kingsley Omonobi and Ndahi Marama

A female suicide bomber, who was arrested by the vigilante group also known as civilian JTF, revealed, yesterday, that 50 other female suicide bombers have been let loose in Maiduguri, the Borno State capital with a mandate to kill 100,000 persons before the end of December 2014.

The arrested female bomber disclosed this on a day the Chief of Army Staff, Lt. General Kenneth Minimah vowed that Boko Haram will be defeated. This came as former Head of State, General Yakubu Gowon charged the army chief and his commanders to urgently correct the negative perception about Nigerian soldiers abandoning their weapons and running away in the midst of the fight against Boko Haram terrorists.

The female suicide bomber was said to have been arrested by civilian JTF at the entrance gate of the University of Maiduguri, while another was apprehended at the busy Post Office area of the metropolis, yesterday.

The arrest came barely a day after two female suicide bombers blew themselves up in Maiduguri Market on

Monday, killing 22 civilians and injuring 48 others.

Upon their arrest, one of the suicide bombers was said to have confessed before being handed over to security operatives that 50 female members of the sect have been initiated and are ready to wreak havoc in Maiduguri and environs before the end of 2014.

Following this disclosure, sources said, tension is now very high in the Borno capital as students of the University of Maiduguri had to undergo serious check by security operatives before being allowed into the campus.

It was gathered that already, students have been banned from entering the campus with their vehicles as only lecturers enjoyed this privilege after rigorous checks and identification.

The civilian JTF have also been put on red alert. It would be recalled that, already four female suicide bombers have caused the deaths of over 100 people in two incidents in Maiduguri recently.

### Troops repel attacks in Konduga

Meanwhile, attempts to launch fresh attacks in Konduga and Maiduguri have been repelled by troops of the 7 Division in Konduga Local Government area of the state.

Konduga is south east and about 40 kilometres drive from Maiduguri, the state capital. Recently troops in the area with support from civilian JTF repelled insurgents, killing more than 200.

Sources said the insurgents numbering more than 300 armed with sophisticated weapons using Hilux vehicles and motorcycles had an encounter with troops while attempting to overrun Konduga and Maiduguri towns. The insurgents were, however, overwhelmed as the troops killed unspecified number of them before they abandoned some of their vehicles, arms and ammunition.

Another source said: "The attacks on insurgents in Konduga by the military on Monday at about 9 p.m left more than 200 terrorists dead".

A top military source confirmed the killing of hundreds of insurgents in the failed attack on Konduga town.

He said: "Our troops repelled attack by Boko Haram sect on Konduga Council Area where the insurgents suffered casualties with none of our troops killed or injured".

### Save image of Army - Gowon

In a related development, former Head of State, General Yakubu Gowon has charged the Chief of Army Staff, Lt. General Kenneth Minimah and his commanders to urgently correct the negative perception about Nigerian soldiers abandoning their weapons and running away in the midst of the fight against terrorists.

Gowon gave the charge just as the Chief of Army Staff, declared that the war against terrorism will be won. "We would be undertaking a review of ongoing operations in the North-East with a view to bringing a speedy end to the reign of terror unleashed on innocent Nigerians by these elements", the Army Chief said.

Speaking at the opening ceremony of the 2014 Chief of Army Staff Conference in Uyo, Gowon, who was represented by former Lagos State Administrator, General Buba Marwa, said: "Ordinary Nigerians in high and low places have expressed reservations that they are not happy that their military who ought to defend our territorial integrity and protect people from internal and external threat appear to be losing ground to Boko Haram insurgents.

"But from the pictures of Boko Haram seen, apart from being mounted on Toyota vehicles, they look rag-tag -- certainly no threat to well-trained and better soldiers of the Nigerian Army. The COAS and commanders need to urgently correct this negative perception about our soldiers who have in the past, a record of professionalism and competence."

Recalling how he tackled security challenges of the civil war, Gowon said: "At a critical period during the civil war, I had only 500, 000 rounds of ammunition as total reserve for the armed forces. I could not continue with operations with such quantity of ammo, and no money.

"I only relied on some patriotic and committed businessmen in Nigeria who were able to get 15million rounds of ammunition within a very short time on their own account - they were paid later by government."

While noting that the Federal Government can buy military equipment directly from friendly and obliging governments as he did during the civil war, Gowon said: "The government recently acquired a loan of \$1billion for fighting the insurgency. Make demands for equipment from it".

Continuing, he said: "I have not lost confidence in our armed forces. I want you to retrieve your honour by reversing some of these lapses into successes, losses into victories; negative opinions into positive opinions. I charge you to go all out to flush those insurgents out of our territories, all the way back to where they came from. That is the task the armed forces must accomplish without delay".

### The biggest threat

On his part, Lt. General Minimah noted that the upsurge of terrorism and violent extremism in the North East of the country has remained the most significant threat facing our dear country today.

"The Nigerian Army is aware of the enormity of this national challenge having fought a 30-month civil war to unite Nigeria and taken part in operations to protect the territorial integrity of other countries which faced similar threats.

"In the last 10 months since my assumption of command, our attention has been focused primarily on tackling the insurgency in the North East and other security challenges in the North Central and North West. Our key priorities have been to maintain all round professional readiness, improve the standard of training, modernize our equipment, pay attention to troops' welfare and enhance force posture.

"During the year, we also developed and implemented new strategies not only to contain current threats but also to better prepare us to combat future security challenges," Minimah said.

#### **Safety of Nigerians, my priority - Jonathan**

Also speaking, President Goodluck Jonathan, represented by the Minister of Defence, General Aliyu Gusau noted that one of the cardinal pillars of the Transformation Agenda is the safety, security and well-being of all Nigerians and other residents irrespective of their tribes or religious affiliations.

"It is a duty that I have devoted my entire being to and resolve towards its attainment. It is in line with my government's resolve that we are ever committed to provide a safe and enabling environment for all Nigerians to carry out their businesses and contribute to the building of a strong, united, prosperous and stable nation.

"Under my leadership, the Federal Government will continue to provide ready assistance to the armed forces to meet operational needs".

The President said resources have been made available to ensure recruitment and training of capable army personnel.

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