

INSECURITY: 7 soldiers feared dead in Borno landmine attack

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...Says soldiers wished us safe journey on our way to deliver ransom

By Kingsley Omonobi, Boluwaji Obahopo, Hassan IbrahimWuyo & David Odama

The state of insecurity in the country heightened last weekend, as no fewer than seven soldiers were killed in a landmine ambush by Boko Haram insurgents in the northern axis of Borno State.

The soldiers were said to be on escort duty en route Baga on Saturday, when they came upon the landmines planted by the insurgents, who followed up with heavy gunfire on the convoy.

This came as a Catholic priest, Rev Father Matthew Dajo of St. Anthony Catholic Church was on Sunday kidnapped by gunmen at Yangoji village, along the Kwali-Abuja highway.

This is even as the Medical Director of Peace Hospital, Ayingba, Kogi State, Dr Azubuike Joel Ihenacho, was yesterday abducted by unidentified gunmen.

Meanwhile, father of one of the nine students of Ahmadu Bello University, ABU, kidnapped along the Abuja-Kaduna highway penultimate Sunday, said yesterday he sold his goats, pigs and other valuables to raise money to pay ransom for release of his ward, saying soldiers wished them safe journey on the way to deliver ransom to the kidnappers.

Killings in Borno

On the killing of soldiers in Borno, it was gathered that the convoy attacked by Boko haram consisted of truckloads of food heading to Baga town of Kukawa local government.

The food supplies were to be distributed to returning Internally Displayed Persons by Borno State Governor, Babagana Zulum.

Some of the civilians who escorted the food were natives of Baga living in Stadium IDP camp, Maiduguri.

Their relatives at the camp confirmed the attack, saying some of them were maimed in the explosion and had been evacuated from the scene of the attack to a hospital in Maiduguri.

Soldiers who survived the attack said the terrorists seized weapons and a gun truck.

It was learned that the attack was at Gazarwa village, a popular Boko Haram checkpoint after Gajiram, before Monguno.

Sources said seven corpses of soldiers and one of CJTF were seen on Sunday morning at Gajiram.

Military sources that took part in the evacuation of injured persons said they were being treated at the military hospital in Maiduguri. The military is yet to comment on the incident.

But spokesperson to Governor Zulum, Isa Gusau, confirmed that neither Zulum nor any component of his detail was part of the attacked convoy.

While Gusau did not deny the attack, he advised journalists to seek clarification from the military.

Efforts to get the military to react to the attack had since proven abortive, as the spokesman of Operation Lafiya Dole, Col. Sagir Musa, failed to pick his telephone calls.