

5 soldiers killed, 35 civilians abducted in 2 ISWAP attacks

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***High rate of kidnapping in Nigeria worrisome — Archbishop Kaigama**

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Five soldiers were killed by Islamic State West Africa Province, ISWAP, in an ambush on a military convoy in Borno State, weekend.

ISWAP split from the mainstream Boko Haram six years ago and rose to become a dominant group.

This came as no fewer than 35 people were kidnapped on Friday, also by ISWAP militants at a fake checkpoint in Garin Kuturu village outside Jakana, 25 kilometres from Maiduguri, Borno State.

Meanwhile, a fresh attack by bandits on Saturday night to kidnap another set and scores of Islamic school students was foiled in Dandume Local Government Area of Katsina State.

Vanguard gathered that the students (Islammiyya students) numbering over one hundred had attended the Maulud celebration in a neighbouring village, Unguwar Al-Kasim, and were on their way home, Mahuta village, when the incident happened.

Also, military and police authorities have informed the Kaduna State Government that four persons have been killed in reprisal attacks in Zangon-Kataf Local Government Area of Kaduna State, Saturday night.

Meanwhile, Catholic Archbishop of Abuja, Most Revd. Ignatius Kaigama, yesterday, decried what he called “the series of kidnappings” in the country.

He said the rate of abductions was such that something urgent must be done to curb the trend.

Saturday’s ISWAP attack on the military convoy took place outside of Mafa, 44 kilometres (27 miles) north of Maiduguri.

“The terrorists fired an RPG (rocket-propelled grenade) on the convoy which hit one of the vehicles with five soldiers in it,” one security source told AFP.

“All the five were killed.”

The insurgents seized two vehicles in the attack, said a second source who gave the same toll.

The jihadist group focuses on military targets, raiding bases, ambushing troops and planting mines on the roads, but recently they have been attacking and abducting civilians.

“The ISWAP terrorists who were dressed in military uniform stopped the vehicles. Some of the passengers fled into the bush while 35 were taken hostage,” a pro-government militia official said.

A woman was shot dead and several others were injured when the militants opened fire on those fleeing into the bush, he said.

Jakana, which lies along the 120-kilometre highway linking Maiduguri and Damaturu, the capital of neighbouring Yobe State, is an ISWAP stronghold.

Abduction of civilians by the jihadists in the area have been on the rise, prompting increased military deployments which have failed to end the abductions.

Efforts to get the military to respond to news of the attack were abortive last night, as calls and text messages to key military sources were neither taken nor replied to.