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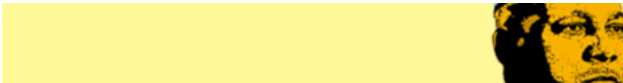
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## Borno shivers over threats of Boko Haram's return

By Isa Umar Gusau &amp; Sharafa Dauda, Maiduguri | Published Date Jul 4, 2010 5:22 AM

The Borno State Commissioner of Police, Ibrahim Abdu, had also said his command deployed intelligence officers to various communities while it would be conducting stop and search with a view to counter any insurgence and safeguard lives and properties.

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Similarly, the Shehu of Borno, Alhaji Abubakar Ibn Umar Garbai El-Kanemi, acting on Monday, June 28, 2010, summoned members of the Borno Emirate Council, along with all district heads and representatives of local government areas, to a security meeting in which the speculated anniversary of the late Boko Haram leader topped discussions. The meeting resolved that district and ward heads should ensure that any suspected member of the sect seen should be reported to the constituted authority while identified mosques are to be monitored to ensure that only Muslims without links to the sect are allowed to worship.

The fear was necessitated by the strong feeling among top echelons that the sect members were beginning to resurface and may want to assert control over the mosques they left as a result of the crisis. This, sources say, is a strategy to prevent a reoccurrence of the bloodbath experienced last year.

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## BETWEEN SECURITY INTELLIGENCE AND A VIDEO CLIP

Amidst these reactions, the controversy that has since trailed the fate of Imam Abubakar Shekau, deputy leader of the Boko Haram sect, heightened. While the police said Shekau was killed in Maiduguri during last year's clashes, a video clip shows the leader granting an interview to a journalist, confirming that he is not dead as claimed by the police. In the video which was obtained in Abuja, Shekau said he has assumed command of the group and will continue to propagate its anti-Western education ideology.

In the clip, Shekau wears a headdress with an AK-47 gun and a stack of religious books behind him. People who know Shekau very well identified him in a still image captured from the video clip. Proclaiming himself leader of the sect, Shekau said during the interview that with the death of the former leader, he "being the deputy (to Yusuf), stepped in and assumed leadership to continue the pursuit of religious knowledge."

When contacted, however, the police insisted on Tuesday that Shekau is dead. The state Commissioner of Police, Ibrahim Abdu, said information available to the police indicated that both leaders of the sect—Yusuf and Shekau—had been killed.

"I have not seen the clip and I cannot comment on what I have not seen. (But) to the best of my knowledge, Shekau and Mohammed Yusuf are dead. If anybody can identify them and tell us their location, we are ready to act. But to us, they are dead. If they are alive, they are wanted persons," Abdu said.

Weekly Trust reports that there had been no conclusive evidence of the claim that Shekau was killed in the Boko Haram clashes, unlike the case of Mohammed Yusuf whose death was confirmed because of the wide circulation of the photo of his corpse.

Initial speculations were that Shekau was killed at the sect's Ibn Taimiyya enclave, when soldiers engaged the members in a gun battle on Tuesday, July 28, 2009, the second day of the clashes. But there was a rumour later that the second-in-command had escaped from the state.

## THE CONTROVERSIAL VIDEO

In Shekau's video clip, he recalls that he was shot in the thigh but was rescued by "fellow believers and protected by Allah." Asked why they use guns although the guns are also products of Western education, he said, "guns are not products of boko... we also can make guns. We even made and used guns."

On where his sect gets weapons from, Shekau said, "we get them from where we get them. God said we should get them (weapons). The Holy Prophet (PBUH), said we should get them." He insisted that the pursuit of western education is prohibited and that his group will continue to propagate the Boko Haram ideology.



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“What we are saying is that it is not permissible to seek boko (Western education) under the prevailing system and given the un-Islamic things introduced in boko,” he said.



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He explained, “we are not fighting western education itself. What we are opposed to are the various un-Islamic things associated with it.”

The video clip was recorded by a journalist who told Sunday Trust that he sought to interview Shekau through some followers in Maiduguri. They then arranged and picked him up at night on April 19, at a location within the city, blindfolded and drove him to a hideout. The journalist said the place should be in Maiduguri because the drive took just about an hour and did not feel like a movement out of the city. He said he was taken into a house and to a pre-set stage for the interview in a room. He also said Shekau had armed guards with him.

### DEADLY SHEKAU

Shekau was, besides being a second-in-command of the sect, the most influential and dreaded member of the Boko Haram sect.

The sect clashed with security agencies in Borno from July 26 to July 30, 2009. About one thousand people were feared dead, amongst them the sect leader, Mohammed Yusuf and his followers as well of policemen, soldiers and residents.



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Our correspondents report that in December 2009, a video clip circulated in Maiduguri, claimed that the deputy leader of the Boko Haram sect, Malam Abubakar Shekau, is alive and planning to regroup followers and launch fresh attacks in the state but the police commissioner was quick to address the state, declaring that the clips were mere gimmicks as police had it on good account that Shekau was killed during the crises in 2009.

Like that December, 2009 clip which the police said was stage-managed, the claim of the journalist that Shekau's interview was held in Maiduguri, has raised some doubts. Many believe the interview couldn't have been held in Maiduguri because the deputy sect leader is not likely to be in Nigeria. He is not likely to risk staying in Maiduguri given measures taken by security agencies in the state and the fact that his members are yet to show their faces, although there are fears that they are coming in one by one.

The police force headquarters in Abuja said in reaction to Shekau's interview that it has launched an investigation into the re-emergence of the deputy leader of the Boko Haram sect.

"The police is looking into the claim of the re-emergence of the sect and will secure lives and property in the country" Police Force Public Relations Officer, Emmanuel Ojukwu, said that policemen have been dispatched to hunt for suspected followers of the sect and their leaders.

The Borno State Government also said it is not taking chances. Alhaji Shehu Mustapha Liberty, the Special Adviser to the governor on Information and Media, said "the police and other security agencies are ready against anybody who tries to breach peace."

Sunday Trust reports that the state governor, Ali Modu Sheriff, had in May this year, signed an order which declared the Boko Haram Islamic sect a society that is dangerous to government, making it unlawful for anyone to belong to the sect or practice its ideologies.

When our correspondents visited Ibn Taimiya, the destroyed enclave of the sect at Unguwar Doki in Maiduguri, armed policemen were guarding the place and this has been the case since July 29, 2009 when soldiers bombed the place in a counter insurgency operation.

## THEORIES OF A THREAT

Now, observers have mixed theories over the resurgence threats of the sect members. There are those who associate the issue with politics, claiming that the state government is trying to create an atmosphere that will attract security concerns in order to prevent a rally being planned by a political party and expected to attract a former head of state to Maiduguri.

Another group however dismiss the theory, arguing that the government hates the issue of Boko Haram and couldn't play politics with it, especially since the ruling party will at some point, need to hold its own rallies and by that, other opposition political parties, including the dreaded one and the former head of state, cannot be prevented.

Others feel that there are some people who are bent on creating security concerns to make money out of it since government will open doors, especially when it fears that Shekau is in Maiduguri.

Yet, others feel that the Boko Haram sect is trying to attract attention to remind authorities that their ideology hasn't been killed.

Other analysts feel some politicians may have hijacked the sect's issues to get back at the state governor and his party ahead of 2011, so that he will be seen as incapable of protecting citizens and as such, whoever he supports for succession will be rejected by the public.

Another group feels the sect is re-grouping and may actually be planning attacks.

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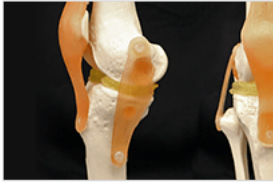


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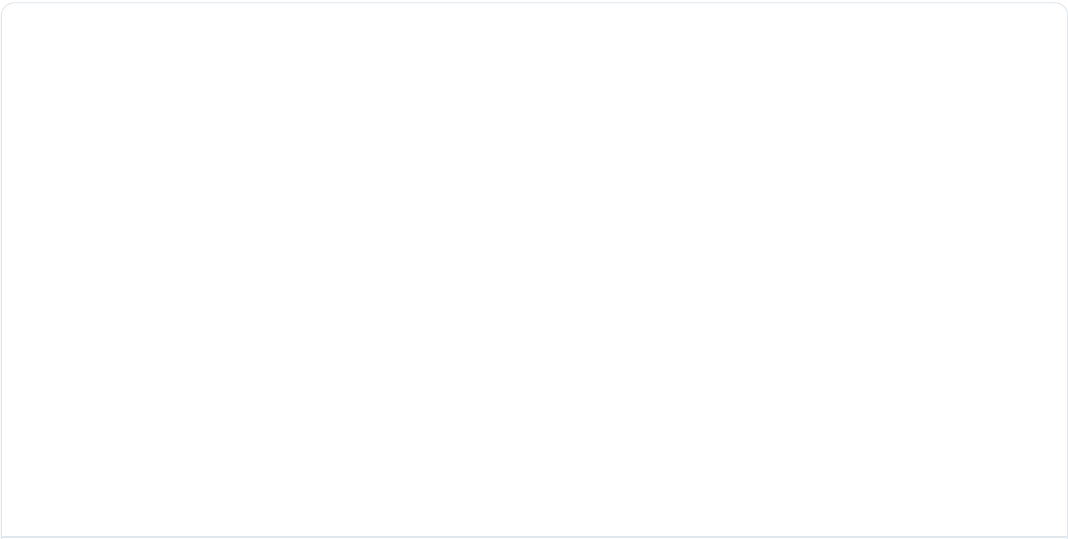


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