

Boko Haram Leader Killed

President orders military operation to continue
Sect existing since 1995, says DQ

From Juliana Taiwo in Abuja and Michael Olugbode in Maiduguri, 07.31.2009
Nigeria ThisDay

After nearly two days of military bombardment of his Maiduguri, Borno State base, the leader of the Islamic fundamentalist group, Boko Haram, Mohammed Yusuf, was killed yesterday in a shoot-out with security forces.

Yusuf's deputy arrested two days ago has also been killed while the militant's enclave has been levelled and the place taken over by soldiers.

Special Adviser on Media to President Umaru Musa Yar'Adua, Mr. Olusegun Adeniyi, told THISDAY last night that the President, who is still in Brazil on a state visit, had been informed about the development.

He said President Yar'Adua had also directed that the security agencies should not relent until they fish out and arrest all the remaining members of the sect wherever they might be.

Governor Ali Modu Sheriff in a broadcast to the people of the state said the victory against the fundamentalists was achieved with the help of God and that of President Yar'Adua, who he said intervened quickly by deploying troops in the state.

The governor promised to come out with a bill which will be presented to the state House of Assembly to regulate religious sermon in the state.

It also emerged last night that the sect had been in existence since 1995 and had operated under different names one of which was Ahlulsunna wal'jama'ah hijra.

Meanwhile, the military will begin what in their parlance is called "Show-of-Force" today in Borno, Bauchi, Kano, Katsina and Yobe States to assure the civilian populace of their preparedness to curtail the activities of Boko Haram.

Stories had earlier gone out that the sect's leader had fled the town and was heading to either Chad or Cameroon.

He was said to have been sighted at Kirenuwa in the Northern part of Borno State fleeing the clampdown on him and members of his group on Wednesday evening.

Those who claimed to have seen him around Kirenuwa, which is along the road to Niger and Cameroon, said he was driven in a Sports Utility Vehicle (SUV).

He was said to be in company with some of his members who came in tow in another SUV.

Yusuf and members of Boko Haram, meaning Western education is sin, have been tormenting some parts of the North since last Sunday.

Early last Sunday, they clashed with policemen in Bauchi, Bauchi State leaving many dead in the wake of the attack.

The violence soon spread to Borno, Yobe and Kano States with even more casualties recorded.

But on Tuesday, soldiers moved into Yusuf's Maiduguri stronghold where they engaged members of the sect in fierce exchange of gunfire.

There were reports of heavy military bombardment of the enclave, though the sect members, said to be fully armed, inflicted some harm on the troops, killing some soldiers in the process.

However, the military action which had been on for two days finally yielded fruits. Yusuf's Maiduguri enclave was finally levelled by the Nigerian security forces yesterday afternoon.

The attack on the stronghold resulted in heavy casualties mostly on the side of the fundamentalists.

Though the military men had taken control of the headquarters of the sect, however, the fleeing members of the group set ablaze the Makera Police Station in the suburb of Maiduguri.

Meanwhile, normalcy is gradually returning to the town as people who have been holed up in their houses since Sunday evening have started trickling out, though random searching of people by security agents is still on.

Our correspondent who went out found the streets littered with corpses. There is serious stench everywhere and those moving about have to cover their nostrils.

Sheriff said in his broadcast: "Let me seize this opportunity to express our most profound gratitude on behalf of the government and people of Borno State to the President, Commander-in-Chief, Alhaji Umaru Musa Yar'Adua, for his quick intervention through the deployment of capable military personnel that have liquidated the miscreants.

"May I also express our gratitude to the General Officer Commanding the Third Armoured Division, Jos and the entire members of the state security forum, top government officials and officers and men of the Nigerian Army and Police for standing by us during this trying period."

The governor in the broadcast aired at 10pm on Wednesday also thanked residents for their patience and understanding while appealing to the entire citizenry to remain calm, vigilant and report any suspicious character in their midst to the nearest security agent.

He said: "Government is aware that some members of the discredited group are being harboured by some unpatriotic members of the public," warning that "any one found harbouring any member of that group will be dealt with."

Sheriff said security agents had been put on red alert and would soon be made to conduct house to house check throughout the state.

He urged all residents to go about their normal business, insisting that adequate security had been put in place to avoid any reoccurrence of the incidence.

The Director of Defence Intelligence (DDI), Col. Mohammed Yerima, said at a joint press briefing by Defence Headquarters, Force Public Relations, Nigerian Police, ACP Emmanuel CS Ojukwu, and Assistant Director Public Relations, State Security Service, Marilyn Ogar, that the militant sect had been in existence since 1995.

He said intelligence reports showed that members of the sect were not only in the North-east but also in some states outside the area.

He said the show-of-force which will be implemented in all states of the affected areas is on the directive of the Chief of Defence Staff, Air Chief Marshall Paul Dike.

Tracing the history of the group, Yerima disclosed that it had operated under different names one of which was Ahlulsunna wal'jama'ah hijra.

He also said the sect leader was first arrested in November 2008 and taken to court but was freed by an Abuja High Court in January 2009.

"We will begin with a little background story on how the crisis snowballed into this current ugly situation. A certain group of Islamic fundamentalists, led by one Mohammed Yusuf had in the recent past been engaging in some suspicious activities with security implications. The group named Boko Haram is rabidly opposed to all forms of western education and civilization.

"They consider as their primary target for attacks, law enforcement agents, critical public infrastructure and centres of worship which in their view are opposed to their doctrines. It has been ascertained that the group did not emerge just of recent.

"They have been in existence as far back as 1995 under different names such as Ahlulsunna

wal'jama'ah hijra. Security agencies have over this period been monitoring and containing their activities even when they transmuted to other names but with the same doctrine of intolerance.

"For instance, on 13 November 2008, the group's leader, Mohammed Yusuf, and quite a number of his followers were arrested by the security operatives and was handed over to the Inspector General of Police for prosecution.

"However, they were subsequently granted bail by an Abuja High Court on the 20 January 2009.

Before then in 2007, one of his ardent disciples, Al-amin, who was also the Kano State leader of the group, was arrested along with some of their members after an attack on a police station in Kano; he was also handed over to the police for prosecution.

"Similarly, between February and April 2009, Yusuf's second in command named Kilakam, a Nigerien, was on two occasions arrested and repatriated to his country.

"In furtherance to their violent tendencies, the extremists sometime in June 2009 launched an attack on a police station in Bama, Borno State but the police was able to contain their violence which left about 17 of their members dead; the leader of the group vowed to avenge the death of his members and ordered his followers to stockpile arms. Based on intelligence report, all security agencies were put on alert which led to the discovery of a hideout where members of the sect were preparing bombs in Maiduguri.

"Following security reports on the activities of Boko Haram, the group's hideout located at Dutsen Tanshi area of Bauchi town was raided on 26 July 2009 by a joint security team and nine of them were arrested and materials for bomb making and other weapons were confiscated.

About two hours later, the group launched another deadly attack on police formations in Bauchi State. Unfortunately for them, they were met with heavy casualty. They subsequently struck in Potiskum, Yobe State where they bombed police stations and set inmates free. Between July 26 and 29, these violent extremists had launched sporadic suicide attacks on Bauchi, Yobe and Borno States.

"Their weapons of offence include Improvised Explosives Devices (IED), AK-47 rifles, dane guns, pistols, daggers, machetes, catapults and clubs.

"Gentlemen of the press, let me take a moment to give you an insight into the crisis management procedure in internal security operations. First of all you may wish to note that the Nigeria Police is responsible for the maintenance of law and order in the country.

"It is only when the NPF is unable to contain the situation that the military might come in.

This notwithstanding, the military cannot intervene or deploy unless so directed by the President. It is against this background that the President, Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces of Federal Republic of Nigeria, having assessed the situation on ground, directed the Chief of Defence Staff to take over the operation of restoring law and order in the affected states.

"Consequently, the Chief of Defence Staff ordered the military to conduct internal security operation which is already in progress. We however assure the public that the military is in control. In fact, Maiduguri town was cleared of the fundamentalist as at yesterday.

"We implore the public to give security agencies accurate and timely information that will assist in ending the crisis. The issue of religious extremism is not peculiar to Nigeria as it has become a global challenge. Countries including Nigeria are not resting on their oars; we therefore enjoin you the press and members of the public to partner with us to tame this monster. The time to act is now," Yerima said.

Fielding questions from newsmen on why Yusuf was yet to be apprehended, Yerima disclosed that as at Wednesday night, the joint team were in pursuit of him (Muhammed Yusuf) and had a lead that he had left Maiduguri for his home in Girgir, in Jakusko Local Government area of Yobe State.

On the allegations that the SSS had been negligent and aided his freedom when he was last arrested, Ogah replied, "Muhammed Yusuf was arrested on November 13, 2008 and as at

November 17 2008, after gathering substantial evidence he was handed over to the police by the SSS for prosecution and was subsequently released by an Abuja High Court on the January 20, 2009.

"It will be wrong for the press to assume that the security agencies failed because it is on record that sufficient intelligence have been collected on Muhammed Yusuf and his followers and same has been passed to action agencies. As at July 14, 2009, 21 reports have been submitted on Muhammed Yusuf activities and members of his group. The duty of State Security Service is that of collecting proactive intelligence and passing it on to our consumers and that we have done sufficiently and we are still doing."

Calm returns, more troops in northern states

Yar'Adua turns to govts, monarchs

Sect leader reportedly killed

From Madu Onuorah (Abuja), Muhammed Abubakar and Njadvra Musa (Maiduguri)
Nigerian Guardian

AFTER four days of fierce gun battle between the Nigerian armed forces and members of an Islamic sect, Boko Haram, calm returned to Maiduguri, the Borno State capital yesterday.

The military said that they had successfully crushed the uprising by the extremist Islamic group, Boko Haram.

Consequently, the state government, which imposed a dusk to dawn curfew in Maiduguri and its environs in the wake of the crisis, reviewed it to 9 p.m. to 6.00 a.m.

Also, a police spokesman, Isa Azare, claimed yesterday that the sect's leader, Mohammed Yusuf, had been killed.

The military and police authorities, which also reviewed the crackdown on the fundamentalists in Abuja yesterday, announced the deployment of more troops in the major cities in the North.

Some of the sect members, who escaped the scene of the hostility in Maiduguri, were allegedly seen crossing the borders into some neighbouring countries. Eyewitnesses said the militants shaved their beards, dropped their Islamic robes for T-shirts and Jeans trousers to avoid arrest by security agents.

Others, who were more daring, struck at a police station in the state and burnt it.

The Defence Headquarters (DHQ) yesterday hinted that more troops would today mount a "show of force" in all the major cities in the North to demonstrate its resolve to end the crisis and assured that the government would protect all law-abiding citizens.

The DHQ also released the biodata of the leader of the 'Boko Haram' sect and an insight into the group's modus operandi.

At a joint press briefing by the DHQ, Nigeria Police and the Department of State Security Services (SSS) on the mayhem in Borno, Yobe and Bauchi states, the North-East and parts of Kano and Katsina states, Director of Defence Information, Col. Mohammed Yerima said troops on duty in the affected states were using "the barest minimum force" as they root out elements of the religious sect.

The trio of Yerima, Force Public Relations Officer, Emmanuel Ojukwu and Assistant Director, Public Relations of the SSS Marilyn Ogar, said groups raising issues on alleged human rights abuses "are not fair on the security agencies as they battle this sect."

They stated that the security agencies deliberately delayed mopping up operation in the states, especially Borno until all the civilians had left, adding that "all civilians living in the enclave were evacuated. All those remaining in the enclave were their loyalists."

Yerima reiterated that "the group named Boko Haram is rabidly opposed to all forms of western education and civilisation. They consider as their primary target for attacks, law enforcement agents, critical public infrastructure and centres of worship which in their view are opposed to their doctrines. It has been ascertained that the group did not emerge just of recent. They have been in existence as far back as 1995 under different names such as Ahlulsunna wal'jama'ah hijra.

"Security agencies have over this period been monitoring and containing their activities even when they transmuted to other names but with the same doctrine of intolerance. For instance, on November 13, 2008, the group's leader, Mohammed Yusuf and quite a number of his followers were arrested by the security operatives and handed over to the Inspector General of Police (IG) for prosecution. However, they were subsequently granted bail by an Abuja High Court on the January 20, 2009. Before then in 2007, one of his ardent disciples, Al-amin, who was also the Kano State leader of the group, was arrested along with some of their members after an attack on a police station in the state ; he was also handed over to the police for prosecution. Similarly, between February and April 2009, Yusuf's second in command, named Kilakam, a Nigerien, was on two occasions arrested and repatriated to his country.

"In furtherance of their violent tendencies, the extremists sometime in June 2009 launched an attack on a police station in Bama, Borno State but the police were able to contain their violence which left about 17 of their members dead; the leader of the group vowed to avenge the death of his members and ordered his followers to stockpile arms. Based on intelligence reports, all security agencies were put on alert, which led to the discovery of a hide-out where members of the sect were preparing bombs in Maiduguri .

"Following security reports on the activities of Boko-haram, the group's hideout located at Dutsen Tanshi area of Bauchi town was raided on July 26, 2009 by a joint security team and nine of them were arrested and materials for bomb making and other weapons were confiscated. About two hours later, the group launched another deadly attack on police formations in Bauchi State , unfortunately for them, they were met with heavy casualty. They subsequently struck in Potiskum, Yobe State where they bombed police stations and set inmates free. Between July 26 and 29, these violent extremists have launched sporadic suicide attacks in Bauchi, Yobe and Borno states . Their weapons of offence include Improvised Explosives Devices (IED), AK-47 rifles, dane guns, pistols, daggers, machetes, catapults and clubs."

The Defence Spokesman said the military only got involved in quelling the activities of the sect following the directive of President Umaru Musa Yar'Adua to the Chief of Defence Staff, Air Chief Marshal Paul Dike "to take over the operation of restoring law and order in the affected states. Consequently, the Chief of Defence Staff ordered the military to conduct internal security operation, which is already in progress. We, however, assure the public that the military is in control. In fact, Maiduguri town was cleared of the fundamentalists as at yesterday (Wednesday).

"We implore the public to give security agencies accurate and timely information that will assist in ending the crisis. The issue of religious extremism is not peculiar to Nigeria as it has become a global challenge. Countries including Nigeria are not resting on their oars; we therefore enjoin you, the press and members of the public, to partner us to tame this monster. The time to act is now!"

Ogar, (SSS spokesman) said the leader of the sect, Muhammed Yusuf was born on January 29, 1970 in Girgir village, Jakusko Local Council of Yobe State and is married to four wives and he has 12 children.

Yar'Adua yesterday reached out to the Moslem Ummah ahead of today's weekly Juma'at services across the country. The President, who is on a state visit to Brazil, warned Moslem youths who belong to other sects to avoid joining the Boko Haram group in the disruption of the peace and security of the nation.

His Special Adviser on Media and Publicity, Mr. Olusegun Adeniyi, said Yar'Adua spent "quite some time" working the telephones with most northern governors, advising them to mobilise traditional and religious leaders in their respective states to mount a campaign against the sect.

Adeniyi said: "President Umaru Yar'Adua who is currently on State Visit to Brazil today (yesterday) called and spoke to most of the northern governors to advise that they mobilise traditional and religious leaders to mount campaign against Boko Haram that seeks to disrupt the peace and

security of the nation."

He expressed delight that many governors from the region had on their own commenced the campaigns against the unacceptable extremists' group and encouraged others to join them.

"The President feels particularly encouraged that some governors have already started implementing this initiative", Adeniyi said.

The group, Adeniyi quoted his boss as saying, should not be the bride of any true Moslem or group, because Islam promotes love and peace among faithful and non-adherents.

There were also reports of an attack on Makera police station, near Kofar Biyu, in the metropolis at 11 p.m. barely two hours after Governor Ali Modu Sheriff visited the enclave.

Sheriff in a special broadcast yesterday, ordered the review of the dusk to dawn curfew imposed on the state capital, Maiduguri and nearby Jere Local Council.

However, despite the assurance by the governor, the city remained deserted as people stayed off the streets. Police still embarked on stop and search of people who came out. Besides, suspects and dead bodies were still being brought to the police headquarters. Unconfirmed reports indicated that the Police College was still subjected to attack by remnants of the insurgents.

Apart from regulating preaching in the state, Sheriff said trouble makers would not be allowed to have access to Borno any longer. Therefore, the Preaching Board, which has remained dormant would be re-constituted, while a bill to regulate preaching would be sent to the House of Assembly.

According to him, this has become necessary, "so that whosoever comes to Borno to preach must obtain permission and follow proper regulatory process to be ascertained, whether he is a genuine preacher or trouble maker. So we will not leave this matter like this, and I can assure the people of the state, we will follow it up and all their structures, wherever they are, will be dismantled."

The demolition of Yusuf's house, which lasted for over eight hours was completed at about 6 p.m. on Wednesday, and it was supervised by the General Officer Commanding (GOC) of the 3rd Armoured Division of the Nigerian Army, Jos, Maj-Gen. Saleh Maina.

Receiving Sheriff, at the scene, Maina directed the Army to be vigilant and ensure that Yusuf and the remnants of the insurgents were tracked down and brought alive. However, reports indicated the sect leader was sighted at Kernowa, in Marte Local Council on Wednesday night.

The demolished house located in an isolated area, near the Railway terminus, hosts a mosque, a clinic, a laboratory where local bombs were manufactured, sewing machines, various brands of vehicles, motorcycles numbering more than 200, and locally arranged bombs among others.

The main house was destroyed yesterday in the presence of Maina, The Chief of Defence Air Staff (CDS) Chief Air Marshal Paul Dike and Inspector-General of Police (IGP), Mr. Ogbonnaya Onovo, are expected in the state capital today.

"The headquarters of the group has been taken over by the security forces. I hereby urge you to go about your normal business from tomorrow (today) as adequate security has been put in place to avoid recurrence of this unfortunate incident.

"Government, private businesses, market places are hereby advised to resume their normal business tomorrow (today). The curfew earlier is hereby amended to 9 p.m.- 6 a.m. until further notice. All those internally displaced who left their houses and fled to take refuge in Army barracks and elsewhere are hereby advised to return to their homes as normalcy has returned."

The governor condoled with families of those who lost their lives and prayed for the repose of their souls.

About 90 people have been hospitalised at the University of Maiduguri Teaching Hospital (UMTH). The casualties included the police, soldiers, prison officials and civilians. The North-East Zonal Disaster Officer of the Nigerian Red Cross Society, Mr. Aliu Maikano, advised the state government to evacuate dead bodies from the streets of the state capital.

He told The Guardian that the exercise had become necessary to avoid health hazards associated with the decay of the bodies. Though he said it was not possible to give the exact number of the dead, adding, "we thank God as at today (yesterday), if you go round, you will find out that things are calm, but dead bodies have littered everywhere on the street. We advise the state government to evacuate the bodies before they decompose because people are coming out for normal business."

The North-East zonal coordinator of the National Emergency Management Agency, (NEMA), Mr. Jediel Apollos, said the outfit was constrained by the lack of vehicles to convey relief materials to the three camps.

About 200 followers of the sect were along with deputy leaders allegedly killed in a raid yesterday.

"We have taken over their enclave, they are on the run and we are going after them," Col. Ben Ahonotu, commander of Operation Flush, was quoted as saying.

"Abubakar Shekau was killed along with 200 followers while trying to escape," from a district of Maiduguri, the capital of Borno State, the police said.

An eyewitness said he counted the bodies of 90 extremists in and around the mosque after the troops had finished pounding the building.

"About 70 bodies littered the areas around the mosque and the base of the Taliban. Inside the house (where Yusuf had been based) we came across 20 bodies," he said.

Some of the fleeing fanatics allegedly cut off their hair and beards

"We spotted dozens of members of Boko Haram fleeing. They stopped by briefly, shaved their hair and beard and discarded their jellabiyah (white Arabic caftans) for Tee-shirts and Jeans," said resident Hamad Bulunkutu.

"They crossed the Gamboru Market River and disappeared from there," agency report added.