
Suspected Boko Haram Gunmen Kidnap 185 People in Nigeria

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The attack, conducted Sunday by well-armed Islamist extremists in the town of Gumsuri, also killed 32 people. It recalled the April kidnappings in Chibok, where more than 200 girls were taken from a school.

President Goodluck Jonathan, who is standing for reelection in February 14 polls, had pledged that the Chibok attack would mark the beginning of the end of terrorism in Nigeria, but violence has escalated since.

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The Islamists have carried out a series of abductions this year, boosting their supply of child fighters, porters and young women who have reportedly been used as sex slaves.

Boko Haram has not claimed the Gumsuri attack, but multiple sources in the village blamed the

extremists whose five-year uprising has killed more than 13,000 people and forced more than 1.5 million others from their homes.

Northeast Nigeria has been the epicentre of the conflict, but unrest has also spread into neighbouring Cameroon, where the military claimed to have killed 116 insurgents while repelling a Wednesday attack on an army base in the border town of Amchide.

'Wives and daughters' abducted

A convoy of gunmen stormed Gumsuri in Borno state on Sunday, throwing petrol bombs into buildings and leaving much of the village destroyed, two local officials and a witness said.

The officials, who put the death toll at 32, said the local government established the number of those abducted by contacting families, ward heads and clerics.

A vigilante leader based in the Borno state capital Maiduguri, Usman Kakani, told AFP that fighters who were in Gumsuri during the attack provided a figure of 191 abducted, including women, girls and boys.

Gumsuri is roughly 70 kilometres (40 miles) south of Maiduguri and falls on the road that leads to Chibok.

Details of the Gumsuri attack took four days to emerge because the mobile phone network in the region has completely collapsed and many roads are impassable.

Those who fled the village said it was too dangerous to head directly to Maiduguri. Instead, they travelled several hundred kilometres in the opposite direction to connect with the main road that leads to the state capital.

Mukhtar Buba, a resident who fled to Maiduguri, also confirmed that women and children were taken. "After killing our youths, the insurgents have taken away our wives and daughters," he said.

The military and police were not immediately available to comment.

Witnesses said the hostages were carted away on trucks towards the Sambisa Forest, a notorious rebel stronghold, where the Chibok girls were also reportedly taken before being divided into smaller groups.

Military questioned

Vigilantes, who have the military's backing, had defended Gumsuri against waves of previous Islamist attacks but were ultimately overpowered on Sunday, local officials said.

The military has left much of the front-line fighting to vigilantes and hunters who have inferior weapons and almost no training.

An army court martial on Wednesday sentenced 54 soldiers to death for mutiny after they refused to deploy for an operation against Boko Haram, blaming a lack of weapons.

The case underscored the struggles the military has faced in challenging the rebels, with soldiers on the ground claiming they have been used as cannon fodder in battles against

militants armed with rocket propelled grenades and heavy artillery.

Nigeria is Africa's largest economy and top oil producer and reports of troops sent to fight without basic communication equipment have sparked outrage.

"The oath of office taken by... soldiers is not a licence to commit suicide," said Femi Falana, defence lawyer for the mutineers, who described the verdict as an outrage.

Top military brass insist gains are being made, but there have few signs of progress and Nigeria is under intense pressure to contain the unrest before February polls.

Cross border violence

The defence ministry in Cameroon's capital Yaounde said Wednesday's raid in Amchide was carried out by several hundred Islamists who ambushed a column of military vehicles with explosives and simultaneously attacked the army base.

Cameroonian troops retaliated instantly, the ministry said, killing 116 insurgents while one soldier has been confirmed dead and another was missing.
