

Beat: Miscellaneous

50 Islamist rebels die in gun battles with Nigerian troops, army says

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USPA News - More than 50 suspected militants belonging to the Islamist group Boko Haram have been killed in northeastern Nigeria in fierce gun battles with soldiers, defense officials confirmed Tuesday, saying the militants were involved in last week's deadly attack on a military barracks. Defense information director Brigadier General Chris Olukolade said the militants were killed during military operations to track down those responsible for Friday's pre-dawn attack on a military camp on the outskirts of Bama town.

The attack lasted several hours and resulted in the deaths of around a dozen soldiers and at least five civilians. Olukolade said troops have since destroyed more than 20 vehicles which were being used to transport militants back to neighboring Cameroon after Friday's attack. "The vehicles were the ones used during the attack on the barracks and were sighted through air surveillance as the terrorists were making efforts to cross the borders back to their haven in Cameroon," he said. The defense official said more than 50 militants were killed during gun battles with ground troops and that "some" others were arrested, although "a good number" were able to escape with injuries. Olukolade, who admitted that several soldiers had also died in the gun battles, did not provide specific figures on the number of arrests and how many militants may have been able to escape. "Intensive cordon and search operations are still ongoing to fish out the insurgents who might be lurking around communities in the area," the spokesman added. Violence related to the Islamist group Boko Haram has killed more than 1,300 people in northeastern Nigeria since May, when a state of emergency was declared in the states of Borno, Yobe and Adamawa. The UN's humanitarian agency OCHA says the region's humanitarian situation has become "increasingly worrisome" over the course of the year due to both Boko Haram attacks and counter-insurgency operations. Friday's attack on the Mohammed Kur Barracks in Bama marked the second serious attack on the military this month, following a December 2 attack in which Boko Haram militants attacked an air force base and military barracks in the city of Maiduguri in Borno State, prompting a 24-hour curfew and a total ban of movements in the area. At least nine people were killed. The Boko Haram is seeking the imposition of an extremist stance of the Shariah law, which is a Muslim code of conduct. The group's name, in the local language of Hausa, roughly translates as "Western religion is sacrilegious" or "non-Islamic religion is a sin." The U.S. government in November formally designated the group a foreign terrorist organization.

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