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NIGERIA | Breakthrough in Chibok Abductions After Week Marked by Violence

The Nigerian military announced the arrest of a key figure in the abduction of over 200 girls from a school in Chibok, southern Borno State on April 14 and the disruption of a Boko Haram terrorist cell. The breakthrough follows a week of violence in several states.

In a statement issued on television June 30, the arrested man was identified as Babuji Ya'ari, a businessman who joined the local vigilante group, the Civilian Joint Task Force (JTF), where he spied for Boko Haram. According to the military, Ya'ari spearheaded the murder of the Emir of Gwoza, and coordinated explosives and other attacks in Maiduguri since 2011. As a result of his arrest, the army was also able to apprehend two female Boko Haram operatives. While Haj Kaka acted as an armorer and spy, Hafsat Bako, detained after escaping to Gombe State, coordinated payments to Boko Haram operatives, who received a minimum of \$61 each, depending on the enormity of their mission.

The intelligence breakthrough follows a particularly difficult week for the nation. Details are currently emerging of a possible suicide bombing at a busy market in the Borno State capital, Maiduguri, in the early hours of July 1 that may have claimed many lives.

At least 50 people are believed dead following targeted attacks by Boko Haram gunmen on church services in communities in southern Borno State on June 29.

Sect members reportedly began by attacking the village of Kwada, where they shot at worshippers and set fire to at least four churches, including those belonging to the Church of Christ in Nations (COCIN), Church of the Brethren (Ekklesiyar Yan'uwa a Nigeria, EYN,) and Deeper Life Bible denominations, before moving on to Kautikari village, where they attacked residents and destroyed a number of houses, including one belonging to a special assistant to the Borno State governor. They are also reportedly attacked Ngurojina and Karagau villages. A local resident informed a Nigerian media agency that, despite calling for assistance, the community did not receive timely protection from the security forces. Boko Haram gunmen are also reportedly attacked Chikwarkir village in Biu Local Government Area (LGA), in southern Borno.

Kwada, Kautikari, Ngurojina and Karagau villages are in Chibok LGA and are located close to Chibok Town, where the schoolgirls were abducted. Following the abductions, Boko Haram militants reportedly delivered letters threatening further attacks in the area.

At least 123 people were killed in Dogon Daji, Kobin, Naidu, Kabamu-Karshi, Hayin Kwanta, Kabani and Gani villages in Sanga LGA, Kaduna State, in an onslaught by armed Fulani

gunmen that began on the evening of June 24. Police in Kaduna later confirmed they had arrested three suspects, recovering three AK47 rifles and 158 rounds of ammunition. On the evening of June 28, Fulani gunmen attacked two more villages in Sanga LGA, leaving at least 25 people dead.

On June 25, at least 21 people were killed and 17 injured in a bombing at a crowded shopping mall in Abuja, the first such attack in the center of the city for several years. One of the attackers was arrested and another killed as he prepared to detonate more devices. The same day four people reportedly died in two explosions near the Folawiyo Energy Depot along Creek Road in Apapa, Lagos, thought to have been caused by improvised explosive devices.

One suspect was reportedly arrested in connection with a bomb and gun attack on Peoples Hotel in the Bayan Gari area of Bauchi Metropolis, Bauchi State, on June 27 that left an estimated 11 people dead and injured 28. According to eyewitnesses, five men in military attire detonated explosives and randomly fired shots before speeding away in a white Toyota Hilux van. On the same day, a 13 year-old boy reportedly averted a car bombing in Kano City of Kano State by alerting police about a suspicious vehicle parked close to a mosque. The discovery came as the Kano police force announced the arrest of a suspect in connection with an explosion that claimed eight lives at the Kano State School of Hygiene on June 24. Also on June 27, Boko Haram fighters in military attire and travelling in four armored personnel carriers and 11 Hilux trucks mounted with anti-aircraft guns reportedly attacked soldiers in Goniri village, Yobe State, with both sides suffering casualties.

Christian Solidarity Worldwide's Chief Executive Mervyn Thomas said, "We extend our heartfelt condolences to the many families bereaved during the series of attacks across the country. In Borno in particular, the targeting of the Christian community is tantamount to religious cleansing and violates the right to freedom of religion or belief, as enshrined in article 38 of Nigeria's federal constitution. While we greatly commend the Nigerian military for the breakthrough in the Chibok case and for making steady inroads into the terrorist network, we also renew our call for effective protection for civilians, particularly in southern Borno and southern Kaduna, so they can go about their daily lives without the threat of violence or death."