

Nigeria sect suspects kill 6 after emergency lifted
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By Ibrahim Mshelizza

MAIDUGURI, Nigeria (Reuters) – Suspected Islamist Boko Haram militants killed six people in Maiduguri in Nigeria's northeast Borno state a day after President Goodluck Jonathan lifted a state of emergency in several regions, the military said on Friday.

Two people were killed on Thursday during a gunfight between suspected Boko Haram members and the military Joint Task Force (JTF) in Maiduguri, before gunmen killed four people at a nearby market, the JTF told Reuters.

"My men were patrolling around the market after it closed," Police Commissioner Bala Hassan said after confirming the death toll from the attacks.

In Kano, northern Nigeria's largest city more than 500 km (300 miles) west of Maiduguri, gunmen riding on motorcycles shot dead three people who were playing cards late on Thursday, the police told Reuters on Friday.

Boko Haram often targets people who are drinking alcohol or suspected of gambling.

The majority of the sect's attacks are in Maiduguri, the capital of Borno state in the far northeast of Nigeria, where its insurgency began in 2009, although the threat has spread and bombings and shootings are common in cities across the north.

President Jonathan on Wednesday rescinded a state of emergency in several local government areas, including in Borno, ahead of the holy Islamic month of Ramadan, which is observed by most of Nigeria's estimated 80 million Muslims.

Curfews and movement restrictions were relaxed in several cities hit by recent violence.

Boko Haram has killed hundreds of people this year in its campaign against Jonathan's administration, part of its goal to carve out an Islamic state in Africa's most populous nation.

The sect claimed it carried out attacks in central Plateau state earlier this month that killed at least 65 people. This region has suffered religious clashes for more than a decade but has not previously been targeted by Boko Haram.

Jonathan said, however, that Boko Haram had nothing to do with the clashes. He blamed them on long-running tension between mostly-Muslim Fulani herdsmen and largely-Christian Berom communities over who land rights in Plateau.

Thousands of Fulanis were ordered out of villages and into temporary camps this week in a military operation aimed at flushing out the perpetrators of recent violence. The nomadic tribes said it was an attempt to push them out of the region.

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