

Extremists gun down 7 civilians in Nigerian mosque  
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## **Extremists gun down 7 civilians in Nigerian mosque**

DAMBOA, NIGERIA — Gunmen believed to be Islamic militants lured Muslims with a call to prayer and gunned them down as they entered the mosque in Damboa village in the latest killings reported in an Islamic uprising in northeast Nigeria, residents and officials said.

The tactics used by Nigeria's Boko Haram terrorist network in Saturday's attack that killed seven residents seem to contradict the thinking of some other Islamic extremists on the continent. Al-Shabab gunmen allowed Muslims to leave Kenya's Westgate mall during their Sept. 21 attack, acting on the realization that the indiscriminate killing of Muslims is a strategic liability.

Survivors in Damboa told The Associated Press that almost all seven people killed were elderly men who used no watches and set the start of their day by the muezzin's call. So they may not have realized that anything was wrong when Saturday's call to prayer came at 4 a.m. instead of the usual 5 a.m.

Kolomi Abba said the attackers first went to the muezzin and forced him to chant the prayer early, then waited for their prey in the mosque. He spoke to an AP reporter on Sunday. Communications are difficult in parts of northeast Nigeria where the military in May cut cellphone and Internet service and barred the use of satellite phones to hinder the communication lines of the extremists.

Saturday's attack turned Damboa's mosque into a battleground. Soldiers protecting the village heard the cries of the men being killed and rushed to the scene. Military spokesman Capt. Aliyu Danja said the troops killed 15 attackers.

Most people would consider killing people in a mosque sacrilegious. But there have been several such atrocities carried out by militants believed to belong to the Boko Haram terrorist network that wants to overthrow the government to install an Islamic state across Nigeria — Africa's biggest oil producer and home to more than 160 million people evenly divided between Christians and Muslims.

On Aug. 11, suspected militants gunned down 47 worshippers as they recited their early morning prayers at a mosque in Konduga, 90 kilometers (60 miles) from Damboa. Those gunmen firebombed 51 homes before rampaging through a nearby village where they killed another 12 civilians.

Damboa resident Abba suggested Saturday's attack could be in retaliation for his recent formation of a youth vigilante group to fight the extremists.

Hundreds of people have been slain in recent months in northeast Nigeria in attacks that have increased despite a military state of emergency instituted on May 14 along with the deployment of thousands of troops, police officers and military intelligence agents.

Boko Haram began the latest insurgency in 2009, targeting government officials and offices and police officers and their stations after a crackdown in which security forces bombed their compound in Maiduguri, the capital of Borno state. Boko Haram's leader, Mohammed Yusuf, was killed in police

custody. Human rights groups say more than 3,000 people have been killed since then in attacks blamed on Boko Haram.

The militants also have killed Muslim clerics who have spoken out against their fanaticism and said their attacks are anti-Islamic. And they have killed health workers on vaccination campaigns, which they claim are a Western plot to make people sterile.

In January, the extremist network shocked Nigerians with the attempted assassination of the revered emir of Kano, the second most important spiritual leader of Nigeria's Muslims. The emir escaped when gunmen on motorcycles attacked his convoy returning from a mosque in northern Kano city, but his driver and two guards were killed.

Emir Ado Bayero said at the time that he has been very careful not to openly denounce the actions of the Islamic militants.

Boko Haram fighters also have targeted Christian churches. On Sept. 26, militants killed a pastor and his son and burned down their church in neighboring Yobe state.

Boko Haram taps into the hopelessness and poverty suffered by millions in predominantly Muslim northern Nigeria, where 72 percent of people live on less than \$1.25 a day compared to 27 percent in the mainly Christian south, according to the New York-based Council on Foreign Relations.

In a study of Boko Haram, it quotes former Nigerian Cabinet minister Nasir Ahmad El-Rufai as saying, "An analysis of public investments in infrastructure and human capital in the northeast would explain why the region is not only home to flawed elections and economic hopelessness but the Boko Haram insurgency as well.

"Indeed, most of the apparent ethnic and religious crises in the North, and the youth violence and criminality in the south, can be linked to increasing economic inequality."