

Beat: Miscellaneous

Nigeria: 7 kidnapped foreigners killed, officials say

-, 12.03.2013, 05:48 Time

USPA News - Seven kidnapped foreigners who were taken hostage last month in northern Nigeria were killed, British, Italian and Greek officials said Sunday. Employees from Greece, Italy, Lebanon, the Philippines, and the United Kingdom were kidnapped by suspected Islamist terrorists on February 16 in Nigeria's Bauchi state.

The victims were working for construction company Setraco Nigeria Ltd. During the attack, a Nigerian security guard was also killed. British Foreign Secretary William Hague on Sunday described the attack as "an act of cold-blooded murder," as he condemned the incident. He also signaled terrorists as those responsible of the attack. "Responsibility for this tragic outcome rests squarely with the terrorists," stated Hague, expressing gratitude to the Nigerian Government for their "unstinting help and cooperation." "We are utterly determined to work [Nigerian officials] to hold the perpetrators of this heinous act to account, and to combat the terrorism which so blights the lives of people in Northern Nigeria and in the wider region," Hague underlined. The killings were also confirmed by the foreign ministries of Italy and Greece. The Ansar al-Muslimeen Islamist group, also known as Ansaru, which has been linked to al-Qaeda, has been blamed for the attack after it claimed responsibility of the kidnappings in February. However, the Ansaru group said the deaths were caused by a rescue operation jointly carried out by Nigerian and British authorities. The Ansaru group has also been linked to the radical Islamic sect Boko Haram, which has been blamed for most of the region's terrorist attacks. The group 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.'

Article online:

<https://www.uspa24.com/bericht-621/nigeria-7-kidnapped-foreigners-killed-officials-say.html>

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Official Federal Reg. No. 7442619