

## **16 Niger villagers killed in Boko Haram attack: Official**

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**Niamey:** Boko Haram jihadists killed 16 civilians in an attack this week on a southeast Niger village, near the Nigerian border, a local official said.

"On July 15, Boko Haram elements fired on locals who were praying in a village near the town of Bosso," said Bako Mamadou, mayor of Bosso, a town in southeast Niger on the border with Nigeria, where the armed Islamist group originated.

"They killed 15 people on the spot and another person succumbed later to their wounds," Mamadou said on state television.

According to the Bosso mayor, four others were injured in the attack.

Meanwhile the Niger army said today it had killed 32 Boko Haram fighters from July 15-17 during "sweeping up" operations following the July 15 attack by "Boko Haram elements".

The defence ministry added that three Islamist fighters were taken into custody, adding that Chadian soldiers also took part in the operation.

Nigeria and Niger, along with Chad and Cameroon, have launched a joint offensive to end Boko Haram's six-year insurgency, which has claimed at least 15,000 lives and caused about 1.5 million people to flee their homes.

There has been a recent spate of Boko Haram attacks in Niger's southeast Diffa region following weeks of relative calm.

The upsurge in attacks on civilians comes after the four-nation coalition pushed the militants out of territory they had seized in northeast Nigeria.

- PTI