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Subject: Two blasts hit northeast Nigeria, shootout kills 1 (Reuters)

MAIDUGURI (Reuters) - Two bomb blasts shook the northeastern Nigerian city of Maiduguri on Wednesday, and a gun battle in another town killed at least one civilian, police said, the first uptick in violence since President Goodluck Jonathan imposed a state of emergency on Saturday.

Heavily armed troops and tanks have been patrolling parts of northeast Nigeria since Jonathan decreed a state of emergency there in an effort to contain a growing Islamist insurgency led by shadowy group Boko Haram.

The group claimed responsibility for a series of bomb attacks across Nigeria on Christmas Day, including one at a church that killed at least 37 people and wounded 57.

The blasts raised fears that Boko Haram, a movement styled on the Taliban whose name means "Western education is forbidden", is trying to ignite sectarian strife in Nigeria, Africa's most populous nation and top oil producer.

The state of emergency covers the northeast, the conflict-prone central city of Jos, and part of Niger state near Abuja. Borders with Cameroon, Chad and Niger in the northeast have been shut.

A Reuters witness heard two blasts on Wednesday evening in Maiduguri, heartland of the Boko Haram insurgency. A security source, who could not be named, said two bombs had hit the perimeter fence of the Nigeria customs facility near the Gamboru vegetable market, but caused little damage and no injuries.

Earlier, a girl was killed in the crossfire of a gun battle between security forces and suspected Boko Haram militants in the town of Birnawa, in the northeastern state of Jigawa.

Jigawa state police commissioner Hashim Salihu Argungu told Reuters: "Our men were able to confront them. Only one girl was killed by stray bullet and one of our men was shot in the leg and he is receiving treatment."

Local press published a statement purportedly from Boko Haram this week warning the north's sizeable Christian minority to leave or be killed, further heightening sectarian tensions in the country of 160 million split roughly evenly between Muslims and Christians.

That prompted the police on Wednesday to issue a statement "all law abiding citizens to remain peaceful,

calm and to go about their lawful businesses without fear of intimidation."

"Nigeria is one united and indivisible entity where citizens are at liberty to reside where they desire and practise whatever faith (they wish)," Police Inspector-General Hafiz Ringim said.

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