

Explosion Near A/Ibom Govt House Kills 2 Prison Inmates, Injures 2 Officials

By **Inibong Ekponta** 7 Hours Ago in News



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Two awaiting – trial inmates at the Uyo Medium Custodial Centre (MCC), along the Wellington Bassey Way (Government House Road), have been confirmed dead with two prison officials critically injured, LEADERSHIP Friday gathered yesterday.

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It was learnt an over – loaded transformer located along Metro road which also serves part of the Deputy Governor’s Lodge and the prison facility exploded,

causing devastating aftershocks and damages worth billions of naira.

The explosion also affected another nearby transformer located along Effiong UdoAkpan street by the Wellington Basseway.

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The state Command of the Nigeria Correctional Service.(NCoS), has confirmed the tragic passing of its two awaiting trial inmates, disclosing that the suspects were waiting to be arraigned for alleged kidnapping and armed robbery before the unfortunate incident.

There was an explosion of a nearby transformer a fortnight ago prompting a high voltage wire snapping and dropping at a portion of NCoS facility, and causing total blackout in the area.

Speaking in an interview with members of the Correspondents' Chapel of the Nigeria Union of Journalists (NUJ), Akwa Ibom State council, on a fact – finding mission to the Atan Offot, Uyo office of the Correctional Service, the State Controller of Corrections, Frank Okonkwo, said the Centre was the worst hit with other facilities severely destroyed.

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He recalled that during the explosion, the two deceased victims were thrown up by the force of the explosion where they were sitting, but sadly died at the University of Uyo Teaching hospital (UUTH) where they rushed to.

“They died after administration of first aid by the doctor who later pronounced them dead,” Okonkwo, explained.

According to the Controller, though the victims were awaiting trial for conspiracy, kidnapping and armed robbing; they were presumed innocent until proven otherwise by the Court, describing the situation as very unfortunate.

He said the families have been contacted and one of them has concluded the processes of retrieving the corpse for burial, maintaining that the Command would

only release the corpse upon completion of investigations.

“It was very unfortunate because the thing caused a lot of damage, both to our facility and the families of the deceased.

“When that explosion occurred at the transformer, officials of PHEDC came and said the explosion was as a result of too much voltage. The thing affected us in that it actually destroyed or damaged all electrical appliances, computers etc in our facility.

“It affected our Barracks as well, and even the official residence of the officer in - charge. But the most painful aspect of it was that it affected two of our inmates that finally lost their life as they were rushed to the hospital.

‘They were thrown off from where they were staying, and immediately our medical personnel administered first aid, and rushed them to the University of Uyo Teaching hospital, where they were later confirmed dead.

“It was a big loss, both to themselves and to the inmates especially when they were just awaiting trial, one of them was standing trial for conspiracy and kidnapping, the other one for armed robbery,” he stressed.

The controller who recalled that same transformer was faulty few years back, though no life was lost, called on relevant authorities to address the issue to forestall reoccurrence.

He added that the legal department was investigating the matter and would present a comprehensive report accordingly.

He also disclosed plans by the command to organise a rehabilitation and empowerment programme “for inmates that have gone through our rehabilitation process,” disclosing that such inmates have acquired some skills and would be given start-up packs “to enable them to be fully integrated when they are eventually discharged into the larger society.”

He explained that “the programme will enable them to be useful to themselves as well as the community so that they don’t have any cause to commit crimes and return to the custodial centre again.”

“We are looking at 30 for now because the financing is going to be huge, because we relying mainly on the goodwill of our donors and organisations, those who have

acquired various skills while in our custody, different skills like tailoring , carpentry, barbing and welding and we intend to draw the beneficiaries from various custodial centres , Uyo, Ikot Abasi, Ikot Ekpene and Eket.

“Those who are serving terms but are on the verge of being discharged between now and December, they are convicts that have successfully accepted our treatment regime by getting themselves usefully engaged when they were in our custody. Those are the ones we want to show appreciation to by organising this programme,” he explained.