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## General

# How IED killed 9-yr-old in Jos

By Hir Joseph, Jos | Publish Date: Feb 13 2016 8:13PM | Updated Date: Feb 13 2016 8:13PM

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The siting of Plateau State Polytechnic (PLASPOLY) at Heipang, at the outskirts of Jos, the state capital, took development to the doorsteps of the rural community. The children do not only enjoy a good quota in admission and employment, but also draw inspiration from students from outside the community. There is also a boom in property development there, with the attendant expansion within the boundaries of Heipang, in Barkin Ladi Local Government Aarea, as farm produce do not go to waste in the search of a market.

But this development did not come with only the good; Heipang is now an admixture of the good and the evil.

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The evil side manifested last week when Heipang, which is also host to the Jos Airport, shook to its foundation, literally. It was a blast from an Improvised Explosive Device (IED) in the hands of a 9-year-old that killed the child.

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The deceased, whose name was given as Dalyop Chollom, was said to have picked the explosive from a refuse dump dug behind an expansive private students’ hostel, beside his father’s plot opposite the state polytechnic.

“Our investigation showed the device was concealed in a shopping bag and dropped into the refuse dump,” Gyang Davou Pam, leader of the local chapter of Berom Youth Movement (BYM), told Daily Trust on Sunday, pointing to the scene.

This brings to two the number of explosions in those areas. The first was in December 2010, when an explosive went off, killing some people in the main town of Barkin Ladi town.

Heipang is located along Jos-Barkin-Ladi road, which links local government areas in both central and southern zones of the state, as well as parts of Nasarawa State.

BYM, a vocal pressure group on the Plateau, is currently investigating the circumstances surrounding the presence of the device concealed in refuse, while also putting pressure on law enforcement agencies “not to treat the incident like previous ones when killings went uninvestigated” in a state gripped by bloody violence for close to a decade now.

The deceased’s two younger ones, Mary Chollom, 4, and Ephraim Habila Pam, 6, survived the blast with multiple injuries, and have been treated and discharged from the hospital.

“They were some distance from the deceased, so they survived the blast,” Mrs. Victoria Chollom, bereaved mother of the deceased told this reporter, standing in front of her kitchen where the explosive was said to have gone off, said.

Dalyop went out with his siblings to scavenge for things to play with that morning, while the adults had gone for the day’s business. There were two different versions of the incident which was felt miles away, including within the campus of the polytechnic, as well as the airport. The incident threw people into panic with large numbers fleeing the area to Jos.

Mr. Cephas Choji, National President of BYM, and Dachung Bagos, National Coordinator of Plateau Youth G17, had separately told Daily Trust on Sunday a day after the incident that it was difficult to get the narrative of the blast correctly because the adults who could have seen it had all gone out for their businesses, while the two surviving children were not in a healthy state to talk.

Choji, who also hails from those parts said there are two accounts of the incident; one saying the children were handed the explosive by a passer-by and the other saying the children stumbled on the nylon bag at the back of their compound while playing.



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Choji said: "The blast was heard from far; and adults rushed back to the village to discover it blew up the children, killing one," he added. A student at the polytechnic said: "Students and staff at the polytechnic panicked and fled in different directions. The incident compelled people to leave the school in droves, most of them fleeing to Jos."

Though the target of the planter of the IED is still unknown, Choji feared the incident may not be unconnected with the attacks which Barkin Ladi has had to suffer for years now since the outbreak of violent hostilities between Fulani and Berom people in the state.

"Heipang is a community with many visitors; there is the state polytechnic which attracts many there. So it will be easy for any trouble maker with the motive of unleashing another terror on our people, to find the community an easy target for such dastardly act like what happened at the weekend," Choji said.

"But, again, we have appealed to our people not to carry the law into their hands. We have since reported the matter to the STF (Special Task Force) which has visited to see things for itself and to take action," he added.

Captain Ikedichi Iweha, spokesman of the STF, recently renamed Operation Safe Haven (OSH), a peace operation comprising of all security agencies, confirmed the incident, but said there was not much information to release to the media as at press time because investigation was still at an early stage.

He said a team of the STF officers and men arrived the scene of the incident immediately and confirmed that there was an explosion which killed a child, adding that the team collected fragments of the device, which have been handed to experts for analysis before the task force can make a public statement.

"The substance in question has not been tested yet. Our men on ground picked up fragments of the device which have been handed to experts. Until they analyse and give us result of the test, we cannot make a public statement. We are still investigating this matter," Captain Iweha said.

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