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Bomb Explosions Rock Post-amnesty Summit In Warri



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By Paul Arhewe, Chesa Chesa, Harris-Okon Emmanuel and Felix Igbekoyi:

- Four Feared Dead
- MEND Claims Responsibility, Vows More Attacks
- Soldiers Take Over Govt House, Warri Streets
- Uduaghan, Orji, Ekpu, Others Condemn Attack
- FG Restates Commitment To Post-amnesty Deal
- Explosion in front of Government House, Warri ... on Monday.

Nigerian Blasts Kill One, Injure Many BOMB blasts on Monday sent guests packing at the post-amnesty dialogue organised in Warri by The Vanguard to chart a hopeful course for the Deep South.

The Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND) admitted it planted the explosives because it is genuinely



fed up with 'the talking and talking' without concrete action.

The first explosion went off at about 10.47 a.m. as Governors' convoys were about to enter the hall full of dignitaries.

It destroyed a car parked outside Government House and sent shrapnel in all directions.

Dialogue Convener, Sam Amuka, publisher of The Vanguard, was making a remark when the second explosive detonated at about 11. 15 a.m., shook the magnificent hall to its foundations, destroyed the glass windows, and caused a stampede.

Some guests jumped through the holes punctured in the windows. Many were injured.

Four traders driving on the NPA Expressway were feared killed in their Mercedes Benz car.

The 11 KVA power line belonging to the Power Holding Company of Nigeria (PHCN) was badly damaged, and it cut off

power supply to Government House and its environs, including Edjebah village.

Many guests expressed shock at the act, which they said ridiculed the security agencies, presented Warri as insecure, and tested Abuja on its post amnesty programme.

“It is amazing. The conference is supposed to find a way out to the problem and this sort of thing happened. I don’t understand. I think the militants should be happy that these prominent people are here,” stated Newswatch Chief Executive Officer, Ray Ekpui.

Uvwie Development Association President General, Tuesday Onoge, said: “I am ashamed because several conferences had been held outside the region, and when it is our turn to say we can move forward, this happened.”

He described the amnesty and post amnesty programmes as failures, and urged the Federal Government to dig into the root of the problem.

Delta State Governor, Emmanuel Uduaghan, pledged that his administration will not be cowed by “renegades” who parade themselves as “freedom fighters.”

His Information Commissioner, Oma Djebah, quoted him as saying that, “The peoples of the Niger Delta will not be intimidated nor deterred by the cowardly act of a few opposed to a peaceful and non-violent approach of resolving the historic grievances of the region.

“We also assure all that we will not be deterred in our determination to fast-track the development of our people.”

MEND Spokesman, Gbomo Jomo, explained in a statement that the group had called for the evacuation of people from the primary school bordering Government House and Delta Broadcasting Service and had given the exact times the bombs would be detonated.

He said more attacks are in the offing, and warned that, “The deceit of endless dialogue and conferences will no longer be tolerated. The land of the people of the Niger Delta was stolen by the oil companies and Northern Nigeria with the stroke of a pen.

“The Vanguard organised and Delta State sponsored conference is one of such tools of deception.

“The Niger Delta has been partitioned into oil blocks which have been distributed among mostly Northerners while indigenes of the Niger Delta can barely survive. One such example being Theophilus Danjuma.

“It is common knowledge that no Southerner can lay claim to an inch of land in the North, so why should we continue to talk as the occupation of our land and theft of our resources by the oil companies and Northern Nigeria persist?

“The Governors of the Niger Delta are shameless and visionless stooges who are more concerned with looting their state treasuries and seeking a second term in office, even against the wishes of their people.

“The MEND will attack any such gatherings designed to propagate more falsehood.

“Members of the public are hereby warned to avoid such gatherings as they may not be fortunate to have a warning before detonation.

“In the coming days, we will carry out a number of attacks against installations and oil companies across the Niger Delta, and will spread out to companies such as Total which have been spared in the past,” the MEND added in an email to AFP.

Others who survived the explosion on Monday included Governors Adams Oshiomhole (Edo) and Ikedi Ohakim (Imo), and Paul Omuh, a retired Major General, and his wife.

Abia State Governor, Theordore Orji, described the incident as “very unfortunate,” and those behind it “enemies of progress.”

His Media Adviser, Ugochukwu Emezue, maintained that South South Governors will not be deterred in their efforts to better the lot of their people.

He thanked God that no life was lost.

Former Peoples Redemption Party (PRP) Governorship candidate, Emmanuel Igbini, called for a probe, which Police Public Relations Officer, Charles Muka, said has already begun.

“Two vehicles were bombed and a woman whose name was yet to be identified died while several others sustained injuries of different shapes,” Muka confirmed.

In Abuja, Acting President Goodluck Jonathan reiterated that despite the attack, the Federal Government will pursue the post-amnesty programme for the development of the Niger Delta.

He made the pledge when he received in the Villa the Chairman/Chief Executive Officer of Global Gas and Refining, Kenneth Yellowe.

Jonathan urged the Niger Delta people and foreign companies operating in the area to remain patient while the programme unfolds.

A statement by Aso Rock said the government will leave no stone unturned in ensuring infrastructural and social development as it addresses the challenges of doing business in the region.

“We are on top of the situation in the Niger Delta. The problems in the region, being human and development related, are such that require time to be addressed.

“I encourage the Niger Delta people and major companies in the region to keep faith with the government, as we are determined to reinvigorate post-amnesty plans and programmes for the region,” Jonathan said.

He also expressed government’s commitment to maintaining peace and security in the Niger Delta, describing peace as the index of development in any society.

After the bomb blasts, up to seven Armoured Personnel Carriers (APC) patrolled the streets, some of which were cordoned off.

Security was tightened at Government House, and at major hotels where the conference guests lodged.

Those coming and going out were searched by security operatives.

The summit was called off till another venue is secured.

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