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# Explosion rocks Maiduguri, as gunmen kill cleric

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and Abdulkareem Haruna  
(Maiduguri)

## • Panic at Benin CBN over Bomb scare

A DEAFENING explosion that was heard all over Maiduguri, the troubled Borno State capital, at about 7.30 a.m. on Sunday may not have hit its target

as the peace keeping Joint Task Force (JTF) said no casualty was recorded.

But a renowned Maiduguri cleric, Goni Ali Gana'a, was killed by a gang of unidentified gun-

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men suspected to be members of Boko Haram in

front of his Kaleri suburb residence at about 8 p.m.

on Saturday.

Those who live near the

murdered cleric's house said he was shot while attending to some guests.

The JTF Head of Field Operation, Col. Victor Ebhaleme, said the blast occurred in front of a local block factory in the Bularingaranatam suburb

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of the city, "But luckily no casualty was recorded."

He said the JTF operatives suspected a possible connivance between local security guards at the factory and the militants who planted the bomb, "Because there is no way such a deadly explosive could have been buried without the knowledge of those guarding the area."

"We are presently making some arrests and after screening, we will let

those who are found to be clean go."

According to one Bukar Mainama, a Kaleri resident, who spoke to newsmen, the explosive was buried by the roadside.

"I was in front of my house, not far from the scene when I heard a loud explosion. I was waiting for a *Keke* NAPEP to go to work, but I had to shelve the plan and rushed back to my room.

"I don't know whether there were casualties or not, but there was no ve-

hicle on the road when the bomb went off," said Bukar.

Meanwhile, security operatives, made up of the police anti-bomb squad, on Saturday night condoned off Akpakpava Street in Benin City where the Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN) is located, following an alert that a bomb has been planted in the area.

Motorists and pedestrians were forced to follow another route as the vicinity was combed in search of the alleged bomb.

Besides CBN, other offices located in the area included the Power Holding Company of Nigeria, Nigeria Postal Services and several banks were also condoned off and searched.

The search for the bomb continued in the night and it was yet to be confirmed if any was found.

When contacted, Edo State Police Acting Spokesman, Ahawara Ejiroro, an Assistant Superintendent (ASP), said he was yet to be fully briefed on the situation.