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## Day of terror in Abuja

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Vehicles burning at the scene of an explosion at Nyanya Motor Park in Abuja ... on Monday. See more pictures on page 12 Photo: NAN.

**By Stella Omona**

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**Seventy-TWO** people were confirmed dead when the dust cleared in the confusion created by an early morning bomb explosion that rocked Nyanya major bus

park in Abuja on Monday.

Nyanya is a satellite town of the Federal Capital Territory (FCT).

The bomb reportedly went off at about 6.30 a.m. when workers are expected to be crowded at the park.

Newsmen who got to the scene of the blast early enough counted about 50 dead bodies, while eyewitnesses said more than 150 bodies may have been moved before the journalists came.

But spokesman of the Nigeria Police, Frank Mba, confirmed the casualty figure of 72 to journalists on behalf of other security agencies after President Goodluck Jonathan visited the scene of the blast.

Mba said 124 others that sustained injuries from the disaster are currently receiving treatment in different hospitals in the FCT.

He added that 16 luxury buses were razed while 24 others were destroyed in the blast.

The police spokesperson said information centres would be opened at all the hospitals where survivors are being attended to to provide information to their families.

Meanwhile, the President who arrived the scene at 12.20 p.m. together with Senate President, David Mark, described the incident as an unnecessary distraction.

He said his government would intensify efforts to end the lingering insurgencies in the country.

The President also urged the media to put up enlightenment programmes aimed at dissuading those behind the attacks.

Already, the death toll is said to be rising, as some of the injured have also given up the ghost.

Human parts and blood littered the Abuja Urban Mass Transport Company (AUMTC) Limited garage under the bridge at Nyanya station while many onlookers milled around the scene.

Some of the dead and the injured were taken to the hospital by ambulances and vans belonging to the

police, the Vehicle Inspection Office (VIO), Federal Road Safety Commission (FRSC) and National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA).

Some eyewitnesses said some of the buses at the garage had already been boarded by passengers when the explosion occurred.

“I saw many people in the bus dead, and many were injured.

“More than two buses carrying workers were cut up by the blast.

“Many people have just been killed, I was waiting for a bus when I heard the explosion,” one of the eyewitnesses told Daily Independent at the scene.

It was not clear yet how the bomb was ferried into the park, but eyewitnesses suspected it was planted by a suicide bomber.

One eyewitness said the explosive was hidden in one of the buses, but another claimed it was planted inside a car, which drove into the park in the early morning rush.

According to a survivor, the vehicle drove into the park and pulled up in front of the already loaded high capacity buses with the driver hurriedly leaving the park and shortly after the explosion went off.

The blast caused confusion, fear and heavy traffic holdup as commuters, motorists and other passerby scampered for safety.

Commuters had a hard time getting to their destinations as most of them had to trek long distances.

Policemen and soldiers joined by men of the FRSC and Nigeria Security and Civil Defence Corps (NSCDC), who arrived early at the scene, struggled to make way for emergency services personnel, as people surged to catch a glimpse of the carnage.

The emergency responders, including the NEMA, also struggled to evacuate the injured, while the corpses were removed in body bags, which soon ran out.

Up to 10 ambulances and open pick-up vans were used

for the first phase of rescue operations.

There was a nearly breakdown of law and order, as soldiers tried to push the crowd back with horsewhips.

The soldiers drew the anger of the crowd when they used horsewhips on them and they surged forward menacingly.

A senior army officer kept appealing to the restive crowd through public address system, to allow emergency services and security operatives do their work.

An 'okada' rider who gave his name as Musa recounted how he escaped death but lost several of his colleagues.

"I just carry person go Area 'C' here for Nyanya and I just dey come back when I hear the big noise. See eight of my fellow people (okada riders) done die. See them done burn. Allah kiyaye!"

A young man was almost mobbed at the scene when he was observed picking up naira notes.

When confronted, he claimed that he had lost some money during the incident.

He was later arrested for questioning by the police.

At the Nyanya General Hospital, medical personnel battled to cope with the large number of injured people, while corpses were heaped in one corner of the premises.

Senior Information Officer of NEMA, Sani Datti, warned onlookers to keep off the scene.

"The National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA) confirmed an explosion today in Nyanya a suburb of the FCT. The explosion occurred at 6.30 a.m. local time.

"The officers of search and rescue and other response agencies are now at the scene and have cordoned off the area. The agency has found it necessary to also warn ordinary citizens to keep off the bomb explosion scene," Datti said in a statement.

Though no group has claimed responsibility for the attack, many are suspecting the Islamic terror group,

Boko Haram, may be responsible.

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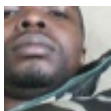


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