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Bloody Day In Jos

Abiodun Oluwarotimi, Abu Nmodu, Adesuwa Tsan And Edegbe Odemwingie, By CHIKA OTUCHIKERE, By George Agba

— May 21, 2014

The city of Jos, the Plateau State capital, came under a major terrorist attack yesterday. Multiple bomb blasts suspected to have been ignited by suicide bombers rocked some parts of the city, killing over 100 people, according to eyewitnesses.

The *Agence France Presse* (AFP) also quoted the the state Coordinator of NEMA, Mohammed Abdulsalam as saying that 188 people died during the blasts.

Abdulsalam said, "the exact figure of died bodies is 118".

The suicide bombers came in two buses wired with explosive devices which went off simultaneously around the ever-busy Terminus Market area where second-hand shoe dealers sold their wares, close to the Nigeria Railway terminus.

The second bomb exploded 20 minutes after the first, and while sympathizers and onlookers gathered at the scene of the first blast to see the extent of damage. It occurred just about five metres away from the first blast, close to the burnt-down Jos Main Market.

An eyewitness who spoke with LEADERSHIP said he counted over 178 corpses burnt beyond recognition. According to the eyewitness, the blast came with a huge conflagration which, he said, scorched most of the victims.

The eye witness said that the blast occurred at the railway terminus close to the new site of the Jos teaching Hospital and the Hamax plaza

Our correspondent who visited the scene of the attacks said he counted over 50 corpses while the commissioner of police of the Plateau State command, Chris Olakpe, confirmed that 46 persons were killed and 47 others injured.

Our correspondent observed that there were heaps of burnt dead bodies on the ground while others were being conveyed in wheelbarrows to a waiting ambulance. Also, human parts littered the spot where the blasts occurred.

According to an eyewitness, the two cars were parked very early in the morning and nobody suspected that the vehicles were laden with dangerous explosives until they went off. Some of the victims who received various degrees of injuries were taken to the Plateau State Specialist Hospital and Bingham University Teaching Hospital.

A survivor of the blast who gave her name as Chidima sells second-hand shoes in the area. She told LEADERSHIP that the bombers came in a brand new Toyota Sienna bus with Plateau Barkin Ladi as registration number.

According to her, she was in her shop when she heard a big sound which threw her to the ground as there was fire everywhere. She said she saw so many dead bodies on the ground while others were burnt beyond recognition.

She added that just as people gathered to rescue those trapped in their vehicles and offer assistance to convey those who received injuries to hospital, another bomb in the second Toyota Sienna bus went off killing scores and injuring many more.

46 die during blasts

Police

Speaking on the twin blasts while addressing journalists at the Jos press centre, Olakpe said 46 people were killed while 45 others received various degrees of injuries. According to him, he was in his office around 3pm when he heard a sound of explosion. He said he

immediately moved to the scene with his men when the second blast occurred 20 minutes later, very close to the scene of the first one.

He added that the suicide bomber left his vehicle in the middle of the road to check the reason for the hold-up at the Terminus market, came back and detonated the bomb, killed himself and a lady sitting behind him in the car.

He appealed to the people of the state not to go very close to a scene of any blast, stressing that there could be a second blast which could kill more people as sympathizers gathered at the scene.

The police boss also said when any explosion occurred people should lie down immediately to avoid shrapnel flying around from injuring them. He appealed to the people to remain calm and not take the law into their hand.

Jonathan condemns blasts, approves stiffer measures in tackling Boko Haram

Meanwhile, President Goodluck Jonathan has described those behind the bomb explosions in Jos as cruel and evil.

Accordingly, he directed the relevant agencies to mobilise support and relief efforts to assist the victims of what he termed tragic assault on human freedom.

Speaking through his special adviser on media and publicity, Dr Reuben Abati, the president also announced that the federal government had concluded plans to rebuild the Chibok school and fortify security in other schools across the country.

Jonathan also said he had approved more measures to strengthen the fight against terrorism in the country, adding that the heads of state of the countries that attended the security summit on Boko Haram in France last weekend "have agreed that each country will contribute one battalion of troops to the international force set up to patrol the border areas, in line with the Resolution of the Lake Chad Basin Commission".

Condemning the Jos bomb blasts, Abati said, "President Goodluck Ebele Jonathan strongly condemns the bomb blasts in Jos, Plateau State, today, describing the perpetrators of this tragic assault on human freedom as cruel and evil."

Noting that the federal government had put measures in place to rebuild the government secondary school, Chibok, and ensure safety of schools, he said, "President Jonathan has also reiterated Nigeria's determination to ensure the safety and security of schools in Borno and other parts of the country and also provide counselling services to affected students to enable them return to school and continue with their academic work.

"Furthermore, the Federal Government of Nigeria will rebuild the Chibok school and fortify security in schools. In collaboration with the UN secretary-general's envoy on education, former British Prime Minister Gordon Brown, and the private sector, the government will launch the 'Safe Schools Initiative' which will address security issues; re-build the destroyed schools; and provide equipment and materials."

Abati, who noted that Jonathan reassured all Nigerians that government was fully committed to winning the war against terror, said the current administration "will not be cowed by the atrocities of enemies of human progress and civilization".

The presidential spokesman added that the president reaffirmed "Nigeria's commitment to the implementation of the resolutions reached by the Summit, in addition to existing measures already being taken by the administration to combat terrorism and ensure the safety of lives".

"President Jonathan states that the Federal Government of Nigeria is prepared to strengthen existing mechanisms to ensure the immediate implementation of the resolutions of the Summit."

Abati listed the resolution of the Boko Haram summit in France as follows: "That every necessary measure should be taken to find the schoolgirls abducted by Boko Haram terrorists from Government Girls' Secondary School, Chibok, Borno State, on 14th April 2014.

"That Nigeria and other countries in the sub-region will continue to co-operate and co-ordinate efforts to combat the Boko Haram menace.

"That the heads of state have agreed that each country will contribute one battalion of troops to the international force set up to patrol the border areas, in line with the Resolution of the Lake Chad Basin Commission."

He noted that, based on the agreement, France, United States of America and the United Kingdom will extend technical assistance to achieve this objective, even as the countries will come together to put in place an effective border management regime.

The last resolution listed was that no effort would be spared to stop the proliferation of small arms and light weapons and the supply of arms and equipment made available to terrorists.

Abati said President Jonathan "considers these measures very useful aspects of the concerted international effort to combat terrorism and put an end to the Boko Haram menace".

Jos blasts act of cowardice – Tambuwal

Speaker of the House of Representatives Hon. Aminu Waziri Tambuwal described as cowardly the multiple bomb attacks that rocked the city of Jos.

Tambuwal, who condemned the act in a press statement signed by his special adviser on media and public Affairs, Malam Imam Imam, described the attacks as acts of cowardice that have no place in civilised societies.

The speaker urged security agencies to redouble their efforts so as to fish out perpetrators of the attacks while appealing to members of the public to provide the security agencies with useful information that will help investigations.

Sponsors of blasts, enemies of democracy – Jang

Meanwhile, Plateau State Governor Jonah David Jang has described the sponsors and masterminds of the bomb attacks in the country as enemies of the nation, democracy and humanity.

Jang, who stated this yesterday in a statement by his Director of Press, James Mannok while reacting to the twin bomb attacks in Jos, condemned the destruction of human lives and property.

The governor also urged the security agencies and all patriotic Nigerians to join hand in fishing out the perpetrators of the dastardly act to save the innocent lives of Nigerians.

Condoling with the victims of the blasts, Jang further stated that the war on terrorism must be collective, saying that government is assessing the situation.

NSGF asks Nigerians not to lose hope

The Northern States Governors' Forum (NSGF) also reacted to the Jos blasts, asking Nigerians living in the northern part of the country not to lose hope or despair over the attacks.

Chairman of the forum and governor of Niger State Dr Mu'azu Babangida Aliyu made the call yesterday while reacting to the multiple explosions that rocked Jos Main Market in the Plateau State capital.

Governor Aliyu assured that leaders at all levels were doing their best to ensure that terrorists were defeated.

In a statement signed by the chairman of Northern SSGs Forum and secretary to the Niger State government, Hon. Saidu Idris Ndako Kpaki, the forum expressed regrets that the murderous act happened at a time when security agencies were doing their best to put an end to the scourge of killing of innocent citizens.

Chibok: Adefuye replies McCain over comments on Jonathan

Nigeria's ambassador to the United States Professor Adebowale Ibidapo Adefuye yesterday blasted Senator John McCain who recently described the Nigerian leader as "some guy called Goodluck Jonathan" while reacting to the abduction of over 200 female students by the Boko Haram terrorist sect.

Adefuye, who addressed the monthly meeting of the Constituency for Africa held at Ritz Carlton in Washington, DC, added that the world should ask whatever happened in McCain's mind to the principle of respect for the territorial integrity and sovereignty of nation states.

He added: "Has Senator McCain forgotten the results of such acts just a few years ago? Could he not learn from the results of previous unilateral military interventions? One wonders what could have happened if the 2008 elections had gone the other way and McCain became the president of the most powerful nation in the world. But thanks to providence. The good Lord has a better plan for the people of the world."

The Nigerian envoy pressed further: "It is instructive that only a week after McCain made his disparaging remarks which might have reinforced his image as a hawk and reminded us of his status as a veteran, the US Senate ignored him and passed a balanced Resolution on May 14 condemning the abduction and urging the US government to assist Nigeria in its effort to rescue the girls safely. This has strengthened the hands of the US government to cooperate with Nigeria in dealing with Boko Haram."

While looking forward to constructive and meaningful engagement with Senator McCain, Adefuye said the Nigerian government would like to call on his well-paid staff to brief him properly on Nigeria and accord the country and the office of the president the respect they deserved.

He continued that it was wrong for the ranking Arizona senator and former Republican presidential candidate to inexplicably seize on the pain of a distressed nation not only to show contempt to the country but also denigrate the office and person of Dr Goodluck Jonathan.

Adefuye stated: "It is this president of the largest economy in Africa, 26th largest economy in the world, America's largest trading partner in Africa and America's most important strategic partner in the continent that McCain described as 'some guy called Goodluck Jonathan' whose consent he would not have sought before deploying US troops to rescue the abducted girls."

He however assured the American people that the abducted girls would be safely rescued while Boko Haram would cease to be a menace, with the support of the United States government and other members of the international community.

"Over here in the United States, the Embassy is immensely grateful for the solidarity and empathy with the abducted schoolgirls and their families at this particularly difficult time for them and Nigeria. The level of support and concern has been incredible and humbling. It came right from President Obama, First Lady Michelle, Congressmen and the general public.

"They tweeted, sent personal mails, made phone calls and joined rallies in support of Bring Back Our Girls Campaign. When these girls eventually return to their families as surely as they will, Americans can expect the eternal gratitude of all Nigerians. This goes to show that we all belong to the same common humanity," he noted.