

11 die as suicide bomber hits police chief's convoy

■ Blast injures 20

■ President: don't be discouraged

From Fanen Ihyongo, Jalingo and Vincent Ikuomola, Abuja

JALINGO, the Taraba State capital, was yesterday rocked by an early morning blast – its first experience since the Boko Haram crisis began.

No fewer than 11 persons were killed in the suicide bombing.

The convoy of the Commissioner of Police, Mr Mamman Sule, appeared to have been the target of the attack, which took place around 8.30a.m.

No group has, however, claimed responsibility for the explosion, which sent the city to sleep as soon as it woke up for the day's activities.

The bombing took place in front of the premises of the Nigeria Union of Pensioners (NUP), beside the Ministry of Finance.

The suspected bomber rode on a motorcycle and forced his way into the convoy of the police chief. "Before he could be intercepted, there was a heavy bang," an eye-witness said.

The bomber waited at the road side for an hour, timing when the police commissioner would pass, another eye-witness said.

The bomber was blown up. Among the casualties were an unidentified person, and an employee of the Ministry of Fi-

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• The Outrider, Police Corporal Usman Suleiman, in the theatre after the explosion ... yesterday

PHOTO: FANEN IHYONG

SOME BOMBINGS THIS YEAR

- Jan. 20, 2012: 185 killed in Kano.
- Feb. 26, 2012: A car bombing in Jos outside of a church kills at least three people.
- March 11, 2012: A car bomb outside of a Catholic church in Jos kills 10.
- April 8: A car bomb in Kaduna, kills 38.
- April 26: A vehicle crashes into *This Day* office in Jabi, Abuja. Another car crashes into a building in Kano housing *This Day*, *The Sun* and *Moment*.



• Sule ... yesterday



• Corp. Suleiman's motorcycle on the road ... yesterday

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nance, Mr. Titus Nuhu.

Sources said Nuhu, who worked in the Accounts Department, had alighted on a motorcycle to cross over to his when the blast occurred. Pieces of his remains were picked from the street.

The Federal Medical Centre (FMC), Jalingo, where the deceased and the injured persons were taken, was crowded.

The Medical Director (MD), Dr. Wiza Inusa, said the condition of 11 injured persons was relatively stable. "But four persons are in a critical condition," he added.

Police Corporal Usman Suleiman is among those in critical condition. Suleiman was the Outrider in the commissioner's convoy. He was groaning in pains when *The Nation* visited the hospital's theatre. His left eye had been damaged by the explosion. There were wounds on his abdomen, laps and legs were injured.

The front wind shield of the police commissioner's official car was damaged.

The wall-fence of the NUP collapsed during the explosion, which shook near-by buildings, including Kataps

President to Nigerians: don't be discouraged

THE President has urged Nigerians not to be discouraged by the terrorist attacks in some parts of the country.

He spoke against the persistence of attacks in the last few days - in Adamawa, Kano and in Taraba (yesterday).

In a statement yesterday, presidential spokesman Dr Reuben Abati said:

"President Goodluck Ebele Jonathan wishes to reassure Nigerians and foreigners resident in the country once again that his administration is taking every necessary action to end the spate of terrorist atrocities in the country.

"Against the background of the recent upsurge in terrorist attacks, the latest of which occurred in Jalingo earlier today, President Jonathan urges Nigerians and foreigners living in the country not to be discouraged or deterred from going about their regular

affairs by the persistence of the mindless bombings and gun attacks.

"The President wholly condemns today's assault on innocent citizens in Jalingo and reaffirms his Administration's unwavering commitment to curbing terrorism in Nigeria and bringing the terrorists and their sponsors to justice.

"Noting, however, that success in the war against terrorism will be more speedily achieved with greater support and assistance from affected communities, President Jonathan calls on all patriotic Nigerians, once again, to promptly report all suspicious persons to national security agencies.

"He extends heartfelt condolences to the families of the victims of the bombings in Jalingo and wishes the injured speedy recovery."

and Associates Chambers, located a few metres from the scene of the blast. The chambers, which belongs to the Attorney General and Commissioner for Justice, Gibbons Kataps, also had its window glasses and ceilings shattered. Seats and tables were upturned.

The road-side blast also pounded the branches of the economic trees in the area. There was panic in the town. Business and social activities were paralysed.

But Sule denied he was the

target. He said: "I am not the target. Definitely, I am not the target at all."

Sule had just been redeployed to Taraba from Yobe State, which has been rocked by multiple blasts recently.

He said bomb experts were invited to inspect the scene.

The suicide bombing was the first in Taraba, since Boko Haram (western education is sin) began its violence.

Acting Inspector General of Police Mohammed Abubakar insists that the police have done more in the effort to

curb the Boko Haram insurgency.

He also disagreed that the Taraba blast was targeted at the Commissioner of Police.

Abubakar was at the State House alongside the Minister of Police Affairs, Captain Caleb Olubolade (rtd), to brief Vice President Namadi Sambo on the Taraba incident.

Abubakar told reporters: "Yes, we are doing something, as you can see. You cannot compare the situation before we came on board and

now."

"My CP was not the target. It was placed on the road and it exploded; nothing has happened to the commissioner and we have made arrests," he added.

Mr Umar Waziri, the Red Cross Information Coordinator in Taraba, confirmed that 11 people died in the bomb attack.

"We can confirm that 11 people were killed. Ten people died on the spot; one person died at the Federal Medical Centre in Jalingo," Waziri told the News Agency of Nigeria (NAN).

He said 20 others injured by the blast had been taken to various medical centres in the city.

Sule said the police had only confirmed the death of three persons from the attack.

Sule said he escaped death "by whiskers".

"The explosives hit the official car I was riding in and shattered the windscreen and front bumpers but I escaped unhurt," he said.

The police commissioner said he was on his way to the office when the bomber struck, just when he entered the ministry's premises, which was adjacent to the Taraba police headquarters.

Soyinka urges Nigerians to prepare for subsidy scam protest