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8 dead, 41 injured, many still missing in train attack

•Buhari orders troops to track down Kaduna terrorists •398 passengers on board •Survivors recount how attack happened •Amaechi: I don't know what to tell Nigerians

By Bolaji Ogundele, Faith...

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Eight people were yesterday confirmed killed in Monday's attack on a Kaduna-bound train by terrorists.

The number of missing persons is still unknown, but the Chief of Defence Staff, Gen. Lucky Irabor, said 29 persons were injured.

Minister of Transport, Rotimi Amaechi, said 41 persons were receiving treatment.

He said there were 398 passengers on board the train, but the Kaduna State

Government said 362 were validated as having boarded through the recognised turnstile based on the manifest.

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Survivors told *The Nation* that the gunmen detonated a bomb on the railtrack and opened fire on the halted train.

President Muhammadu Buhari condemned the attack, ordering Service Chiefs to ensure the quick rescue of those abducted and to also apprehend the perpetrators.

Amaechi, who inspected the scene of the attack, said the incident would have been averted if his ministry had gotten approval for the procurement of integrated security surveillance and monitoring solution.

The minister was accompanied by the Minister of Police Affairs; Mohammed Dingyadi, the Minister of State for Transportation Gbemisola Saraki, Managing Director of Nigerian Railway Corporation (NRC) Fidel Okhiria and others.

Speaking after inspecting the site, Amaechi said: “We don’t have all the figures of missing persons, kidnapped and those injured at the moment but the numbers we have is that there are eight casualties.

“There are 41 persons in the hospital and the total number of passengers on board is 398.”

The impact of the explosive, which appeared to have been planted on the track by the left rail towards Dutse station from Rijana, affected the first coach.

One of our correspondents observed that the train was riddled with bullet holes, with windows were shattered. The floors and walls of the coaches were blood-stained.

Clothes, handbags, footwear, snacks, travel bags, praying mat, ATM cards, identity cards, photographs, rosaries, water bottles and other items were scattered on the floors.

Amaechi said the digital system, which costs about N3 billion, would have helped detect human activities around the rail track.

The minister also said the damage done to the rail facility could cost over N3billion to fix, but he did not explain how he arrived at the figure.

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Amaechi said: “We have lost locomotives. we have lost tracks. some have been

kidnapped, we have lost human beings and to fix all those things will cost more than N3billion.”

On what was delaying the installation of the digital security system, Amaechi said: “We have not been able to install the security sensors because the procurement process is a bit difficult. It is typical of Nigerians.

“To shorten the process and save lives like this, we have to do the needful but the process is tedious, the approval is also tedious, we have not been able to get that approval that will lead to purchase of those items.

“If those items were here, drones alone will tell you that there are people around the rail tracks because there are drones, there are equipment that pick sensors if you touch the track but unfortunately the process has not been able to get us that approval for us to import those items.

“So for me, I am devastated and I honestly don’t know what to tell Nigerians anymore... The ministry of transport has finished everything, the other agencies are not under me.”

The Nigerian Railway Corporation (NRC) has suspended service along the Abuja-Kaduna route.

The Kaduna State Government said all trapped passengers in the train have been evacuated.

Commissioner of Internal Security and Home Affairs, Samuel Aruwan, said in a statement that the government was footing the medical bills of the injured passengers.

He said search-and-rescue operations were still ongoing in the general area.

The commissioner said the 362 on the manifest did not include staff members of the NRC.

Aruwan said: “The Kaduna State Government has received from the NRC, the detailed passenger manifest for the Abuja-Kaduna train service AK9, which was attacked by terrorists on Monday.

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“According to the documents received, 398 passengers bought tickets for the trip, but 362 were validated as having boarded the train through the recognised turnstile.

“The passenger manifest does not include NRC staff and security officials who were on board.

“Furthermore, security agencies have reported that eight bodies were recovered and 26 persons were injured during the attack.

“Investigations are still ongoing to ascertain the status of the passengers who were onboard the train and remain unaccounted for at the time of this update. Search operations are also being sustained.

“Citizens are requested to contact the Kaduna State Emergency Management Agency on the phone line 09088923398, to make enquiries or provide information regarding passengers who were on board the Abuja-Kaduna train AK9.”

Buhari orders rescue of abductees

President Buhari told the military chiefs that no one or group should be “allowed to hold the country to ransom.”

The President spoke after receiving briefings from Gen. Irabor and Service Chiefs on the incident in Abuja yesterday.

President Buhari ordered that all the processes for the implementation of the integrated security surveillance and monitoring of the Abuja- Kaduna and Lagos-Ibadan rail lines were completed in earnest.

He also directed the NRC to repair the bombed section of the rail track and resume operations along the corridor as quickly as possible.

The President’s directives were contained in a statement by his Senior Special Assistant on Media and Publicity, Mallam Garba Shehu.

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Buhari, according to the statement by Garba, reiterated his earlier directive that the

military should deal ruthlessly with terrorists.

He said: “Like most Nigerians, I am deeply pained by its occurrence, the second of its type, which has resulted in the death of a yet-to-be-determined number of passengers and others who suffered injuries.

“The attack on the train, a safe means of transport to many, is callous; and our thoughts are with the families of the deceased and prayers for the injured.”

The President commended the security agencies for their prompt response and the emergency personnel who evacuated and treated those with minor injuries.

Chief of Army Staff, Lt-Gen. Faruk Yahaya; Chief of Air Staff, Air Marshal Isiaka Amao; Chief of Defence Intelligence Maj.-Gen. Samuel Adebayo; Inspector-General of Police, Usman Baba, and the Director-General of the Department of State Services (DSS), Yusuf Magaji Bichi attended the meeting.

CDS Irabor told reporters after the briefing that the attackers used Improvised Explosive Devices(IEDs) to blow up the rail. He put the number of those injured at 29.

He said: “We have come to brief the President regarding the unfortunate incident, where some criminals, bandits had gone to lay IEDs on the rail tracks and a passenger train was demobilised.

“Seven Nigerians were killed and 29 others wounded. Some were kidnapped and we are yet to establish the exact number.”

He assured Nigerians that the military and other security agencies will not rest on their oars until everywhere is secured.

Vice President Yemi Osinbajo said the attack reinforced the need to provide security and surveillance along the country’s rail tracks

He spoke when he visited victims of the attack at St. Gerald Catholic Hospital and 44 Nigerian Army Reference Hospital, Kaduna.

Osinbajo was accompanied by Kaduna State Governor Nasir El-Rufai and other officials.

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The Vice President condemned the attack and extended his condolence to the

families of passengers that lost their lives.

Lt.-Gen. Yahaya said troops were on the hunt for the terrorists.

He said no effort will be spared in tracking and rescuing all the victims.

The Inspector-General of Police (IGP), Usman Baba, said security agencies would adopt a new strategy to tackle criminals.

“The issue of the train is an isolated one and we will see how we can come up with a strategy to ensure that Nigerians who value travelling by train do not get discouraged by what happened,” he said.

The victims

The Trade Union Congress (TUC) Secretary-General, Comrade Musa Ozigi-Lawal, was killed in the attack.

A former TUC president, Peter Esele confirmed Ozigi-Lawal’s death.

The TUC also mourned its Kwara State chapter Chairman, Mr Akin Akinsola, who also died in the attack.

TUC President, Mr Quadri Olaleye, said Musa-Lawal and Akinsola were on their way to Kaduna for an official assignment.

“Comrade Ozigi served in the capacity of General Secretary, Construction and Civil Engineering Senior Staff Association (CCESSA), an affiliate of TUC for almost two decades before he joined the Congress in 2012.

“Comrade Akinsola was an employee of the Dangote Flour Mill under OLAM; they were both seasoned trade unionists,” he said.

A Director at the National Board of Technical Education (NBTE) Kaduna Head office, Abdul Isa Kofar-Mata, and a young female dentist, Dr. Chinelo Nwando, were among those killed.

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