

B'Haram leader: I ordered Apapa, Lagos bombing



A screengrab taken from a video by Boko Haram insurgent showing leader of the sect, Abubakar Shekau in centre.

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LEADER of the violent Islamic sect, Boko Haram, Abubakar Shekau, has claimed responsibility for two explosions on June 25 at a fuel depot in Apapa, Lagos.

Shekau, according to *Agence-France Presse*

reports, made the claim in a new video sent to the French news agency.

Also, the Lagos State Council of Arewa Chiefs on Saturday confirmed that the June 25 blasts at Apapa were indeed bomb attacks masterminded by Boko Haram.

The Sarkin Hausawa of Lagos State and chairman of the council, Alhaji Sani Kabir, said the police had confirmed that the Apapa explosions were actually bomb blasts and that 7,000 northerners had been arrested by the police in Lagos over the incident.

The Shekau video has since been posted on the internet.

In the video, Shekau, standing next to at least 10 gunmen in front of two Armoured Personnel Carriers and two pick-up trucks, said, "A bomb went off in Lagos. I ordered (the bomber) who went and detonated it."

Two blasts, minutes apart, had rocked Apapa, where Nigeria's main sea ports are located, on the night of June 25.

While the Lagos State Government and the police had said the incident was a mere explosion caused by a gas cylinder at a nearby depot, there had been speculations that a female suicide bomber had detonated an Improvised Explosive Device.

"The two blasts last month in Apapa were almost certainly caused by bombs," *Reuters* quoted three senior security sources and the manager of a major container company to have said.

Reacting to the Shekau claim, the Force Police Public Relations Officer, ACP Frank Mba, told *The PUNCH* on Sunday that the police had been studying the video and that they would wait for the conclusion of investigation into the video before making any

pronouncement.

Mba said, "We are studying the video. Our approach is to first conduct a thorough IT and forensic analysis of the video in order to establish its authenticity or otherwise.

"It is only after the investigation that we will be in a position to make an evidence-based stand."

When the blasts occurred, the Lagos State Police Public Relations Officer, Ngozi Braide, had said they were an accident caused by a gas canister, but security sources had told Reuters that it was a cover-up meant to avoid panic in Lagos.

Apparently reacting to the police claim then, Shekau, in his latest video, said, "You said it was a fire incident. Well, if you hide it from people you can't hide it from Allah."

"The target of the Lagos bombs was a fuel depot. Had it gone up, it could have caused a massive chain explosion and disrupted Nigeria's mostly imported fuel supply," *Reuters* reports said on Sunday.

Attempts to get the reaction of the Lagos State Government on Sunday failed as the Commissioner for Information and Strategy, Lateef Ibirogbu, did not pick calls to his mobile phone. He also did not respond to text messages sent to his phone on the matter.

Shekau is in the habit of releasing video clips to claim responsibility for attacks by Boko Haram. He has also been known to claim attacks suspected to be the work of other criminal gangs.

A major flaw in the new video however is that Shekau wrongly identified the Edo State Governor Adams Oshiomhole as the governor of Lagos State.

The leader of the Hausa community in Lagos at the briefing on Saturday warned all Hausa people in the state to be law-abiding and not to do anything that would strain the relationship the Hausas and Yoruba had enjoyed in the state.

Kabir said the council had met with several monarchs and local government authorities on the issue.

He urged his members to stop sleeping in mosques, abandoned buildings and under the bridges as the security situation in the country had become volatile. Kabir said any of his members accused of terrorism by security agencies would be immediately handed over to the police and would not be shielded.

He also advised all northerners in the state to register with the Lagos State Residents Registration Agency so that the government could have their data.

When asked if it was only northerners that were involved in terrorism in Lagos, he said "Just like you rightly observed two weeks ago, security agencies, particularly the police, under the leadership of the CP, invited us for an interactive session. Actually, we raised the same question to the police why they are only inviting people from the North.

"Prior to the meeting, there had been indiscriminate arrest of northerners. At the last count it was more than 7,000. It was as a result of the incessant arrest that we leaders of Arewa demanded an explanation for the arrest of northerners.

"Security agencies got information from within the community that we have influx of people coming from the North. But what is important is that after the meeting with security agencies, in order to prevent further stigmatisation of the Northern community, we met with council of obas, baales, LCDA and we let them know it was not a northern problem alone but a general problem."

He urged the Federal Government to negotiate with terrorists as military approach alone could not solve terrorism.

About a year ago, a suspected Boko Haram member from Chad was arrested by security agencies in Lagos.

During a military raid on March 21, 2013, soldiers ransacked a building on Aromire Street in Ijora, where one of the arrested persons, Ibrahim Musa, was occupying five

rooms.

A bomb kept in a cooler and hidden inside the ceiling of one of the rooms in Musa's apartment was recovered by the soldiers.

Other items found were AK-47 rifles, cartridges and daggers.

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