

How 46 Soldiers Were Burnt to Death

• *Yar' Adua cuts short foreign trip as victims are buried today*

Poor visibility caused the gruesome accident that led to the death of one officer and 45 Nigerian soldiers on the Kari-Potiskum-Maiduguri road Wednesday night, the Federal Road Safety Commission (FRSC) said yesterday.

*From Juliana Taiwo in Abuja
and Seriki Adinoyi in Jos*

The death of the soldiers has caused President Umaru Musa Yar' Adua to cut short his trip to Arusha, Tanzania, where he is attending the African Union's Committee of 12 meeting. He

will return home early today in honour of the dead soldiers.

Yesterday, soldiers were still searching the scene of the accident for the mutilated parts of their colleagues who died in the ghastly road accident.

The dead soldiers, including a captain, were returning from peace-keeping operations in Dafur, Sudan, when their bus collided with a petrol tanker.

The Commander of FRSC in Potiskum, Yobe State, Mr Victor Osuhor, told *News Agency of Nigeria (NAN)* that the tanker lost control and rammed into the last of seven military trucks travelling in a convoy to Borno State.

The tanker dragged the truck several metres before the two vehicles burst into flames,

killing the soldiers, the tanker driver and his passenger.

"Forty-four bodies were evacuated between 2.30 am and 3 am and conveyed to Bauchi while two others were recovered this morning at about 9 am," Osuhor said.

Sympathisers from the local community and motorists shed tears as soldiers and FRSC officials searched for the burnt human parts at the scene.

The Yobe Sector Commander

of FRSC, Mr Emmanuel Ekekwe, who was also at the scene, said the command had deployed more personnel in the scene to remove the vehicles.

Motorists had to divert through the bush to continue their journey.

The military trucks were heading to Monguno in Borno State before the accident.

Ekekwe said poor visibility was responsible for the crash.

"The two vehicles crashed and

Continued on Pg. 4

Death Toll Hits 42 as Foreigners Flee S'Africa

*By Gboyega Akinsanmi
with agency reports*

Reuters reported that Mozambique, Malawi and other neighbouring countries had commenced immediate

Continued on Pg. 4

Death toll in the xenophobic uprisings in South Africa has risen to 42 as thousands of immigrants fled the country yesterday despite the deployment of soldiers.

Tsi

Top Gainers	
UAC-PROP	+1.1% (N24.99)+5%
PRESCO	+1.2% (N26.55)+4.9%
DANSUGAR	+1.01k (N35.00)+2.9%
FLOURMILL	+1.02k (N89.02)+1.1%
NESTLE	+2.00k (N222.00)+0.9%
Top Losers	
OANDO	-10.45k (N198.55)-5%
CADBURY	-1.77k (N37.90)-4.4%
BBC	-1.51k (N47.00)-3.1%
ETI	-4.20k (N239.00)-1.7%
GUINNESS	-1.45k (N127.05)-1.1%

Lagos	
Volume :	509.0 million
Value :	N8.4 billion
Deals :	17,844
* As at yesterday 22/05/08	
Details on pg. 71	

GOING FOR GAS...

Yar'Adua's action.

Shortly after the Senate Leader, Senator Teslim Folarin, introduced the first item on yesterday's order paper and moved a motion calling on the Senate to consider Yar'Adua's request for the confirmation of the nominations of Waziri and the five other members in accordance with Section 2(3) of the EFCC Act, 2004, with the Minority Whip, Senator Sani Yerima seconding it, Mark put the motion to question and members unanimously voted for it.

Mark said thereafter: "I think the normal practice is for us to refer the request to the committee except anybody has any objections to make. The committee would be given one week to conclude the assignment and report back for confirmation."

But Akinyede said he had observations to make in respect of the letter sent to the Senate President on the appointment by Aondoakaa in which he attempted to justify Yar'Adua's action since the letter was a reply to his (Akinyede's) letter to him (Aondoakaa).

He told the Senate that he wrote a letter to the Attorney-General when Waziri's appointment in acting capacity was announced Thursday, last week, to draw his attention to the breach of the provision of the EFCC Act, 2004.

According to him, "There was an appointment made in acting capacity and that was why I issued a letter to the Attorney-General because there is no provision for acting Chairman, as the position does not exist. But I am surprised that the Attorney-General wants to justify the appointment."

"The Attorney-General argued that the action of Mr. President is covered by Chapter 123, Section 11 (1) of the Interpretation Act on appointment which states that

or not to clear Waziri, we are being blackmailed to clear the woman. Ibrahim Lamorde has been acting for several months. If the President wants to appoint a substantive chairman, he should do so in consonance with the provisions of the EFCC Act, 2004. I see the appointment of Waziri as acting chairman as a breach of procedure.

"This nomination is already very controversial and the best thing to do is to send it back to Mr. President. The Chairman of the Committee has already received a bashing from the Attorney General and the Chairman has said that it was not correct and what other different report can we get from the Committee chairman after screening?"

But Senator Kanti Bello (Katsina North) said it was unfortunate that allegations were being made, pointing out that "if a Senator has got an information, he must lay it on the table."

He maintained that the allegations that Waziri had resumed office should be investigated and confirmed before making it.

Senator Abubakar Sodangi (Nasarawa West) advised the Senate to return the nominations to Yar'Adua to enable him represent them in line with due process as clearly enshrined in the EFCC Act, 2004.

However, Senator Sani Ahmed Yerima (Zamfara West), who is a member of the Senate Committee on Drugs, Narcotics, Anti-Corruption and Financial Crimes, disagreed with his colleagues, saying Yar'Adua was right to appoint acting Chairman for the EFCC, prelude to Senate confirmation.

He said Senator Akinyede, who is the chairman of the committee, was not in a position to write the Attorney-General of the Federation in the first instance on the announcement of the appointment

there was a fire, the people inside were burned. Both drivers also died," he said, disclosing that the petrol tanker was empty.

Maj. Gen. Luka Yusuf, the Chief of Army Staff, said that the next-of-kin of the departed soldiers had been contacted and arrangements put in place for the interment of the deceased with full military honours at Abuja today.

"The government assures the families that their gallant ones died serving the nation and their sacrifices will not be in vain," he said.

He prayed God to give the families the fortitude to bear the loss.

Yusuf, who left Abuja yesterday for the scene of the accident, described the tragedy as sad.

He said: "These fine gallant soldiers of 244 Battalion were returning to their Unit in Monguno, Borno State from Abuja where they arrived on Tuesday May 20, after serving six months with the UN Peace Keeping Mission in Sudan."

The Army Headquarters has, however, announced there would be an investigation into the cause of the accident.

Describing the accident as a national calamity, Yusuf, who arrived Bauchi Airport at about 11.30 am yesterday morning aboard a military plane from where he left for the scene of the accident, expressed deep sorrow.

He immediately proceeded to the accident scene in company with the acting Governor of Bauchi State, Alhaji Mohammed Gadi, the Commandant of the Bauchi Armoured Corps Centre, Major General Saleh Maina, and other top military officers who all expressed their heartfelt sympathy.

One of the officers in the entourage of the Army chief who spoke briefly with journalists at the airport said: "This is really a big

SOLDIERS BURNED TO DEATH *Cont'd from P1*

tragedy for us and it will remain in our memories for a very long time, just as it has reminded us of similar tragedies that have befallen us in the past", possibly referring to the September 2006 plane crash in Benue State that claimed the lives of some top military officers.

The charred bodies of the deceased soldiers and officer were deposited at the Bauchi Specialist Hospital on Thursday morning, even as arrangements were being concluded to bury their remains.

Yar'Adua said yesterday that he received "with sadness news of the tragic death of 46 Nigerian soldiers in a ghastly road accident on their return to the country after meritorious national service in Sudan's Darfur Region".

He said he deeply regrets that having bravely confronted and survived the hazards of service in strife-ridden Darfur, "the gallant soldiers returned home only to lose their lives in a dreadful motor collision on their way back to their base".

A statement signed by the Special Adviser to the President on Communications, Mr. Olusegun Adeniyi, quoted the President as saying that the accidental death "of these brave soldiers whilst on

national service is an immense loss to the country".

Adeniyi said that the President had directed the Defence Headquarters and the Nigerian Army authorities to convey his personal condolences to the families of the dead soldiers and make appropriate arrangements to give them a befitting burial.

He also said that President Yar'Adua further directed that "immediate compassionate action be taken to alleviate the colossal trauma of their shocking deaths on their spouses, children and other dependants".

Also in a statement yesterday, Vice-President Goodluck Jonathan described as shocking, the news of the death of the 46 Nigerian soldiers.

"These gallant Nigerian soldiers had just been re-inducted from the AU Peace Mission, where they had served meritoriously, and flown our nation's banner with pride and distinction. Death remains an enduring paradox. If not, how can it be that men, who without hesitation, have time and again, risked life and limb in the defence of the honour of our nation and flag, be cut down so casually in an automobile acci-

dent... just a few miles away from home!" the VP said.

"It is with great sadness that I join the President, the Minister of Defence, the Nigerian Military High Command, as well as all Nigerians, to mourn the passage of these exemplary soldiers. I grieve with the families that have lost breadwinners and loved ones. I pray the Almighty to give each and every one of them the fortitude to bear the loss. I urge them all to remain steadfast in faith in God and fatherland, so that these gallant heroes wouldn't have lived and died in vain," he said.

Chief of Defence Staff, Gen. Andrew Azazi, said yesterday in a statement that flags would be flown at half mast and all activities in the Ministry of Defence and Defence Headquarters cancelled in honour of the departed soldiers.

"The tragic incident occurred when two of the trucks conveying the returning soldiers from the Nnamdi Azikiwe International Airport, Abuja collided with a tanker and exploded in flames. Five soldiers also sustained injuries and are already receiving treatment in the hospital," Azazi said.

DEATH TOLL *Cont'd from P1*

evacuation of their nationals to save them from further attacks.

Reports said more than 10,000 Mozambicans had fled South Africa to escape the attacks that had claimed many lives, though the number of immigrants from Malawi quitting the country has not been specified.

Mozambican Deputy Immigration Director, Mr. Leonardo Boby, said in Maputo that 10,047 returned home in buses provided by the government

He said the mob invaded a Nigerian-owned tavern last Tuesday, damaging property. According to him, no injuries were reported, but last Wednesday, the mob began intimidating the Nigerians.

He said the South African policemen were ready to respond to any further xenophobic attacks.

South African Development Commission (SADC) envoys condemned the attack yesterday, describing it as "deplorable, inhu-

manous weapons, on Wednesday gathered at Umbilo suburb in Durban, demanding that foreigners should leave KwaZulu-Natal.

It said soldiers backed police in yesterday's raids in Johannesburg and air force helicopters patrolled Alexandra township after President Thabo Mbeki approved army intervention to help end unrest that has threatened to destabilise the country.

The African National Congress (ANC) criticised the police for reacting too slowly to 11 days of