

TODAY'S WEATHER  **ABUJA** 23-30°C  **MAIDUGURI** 28-37°C  **ENUGU** 24-35°C  **KANO** 25-37°C  **LAGOS** 23-27°C  **PORT HARCOURT** 22-28°C

Shehu of Borno Unhurt as 5 Die in Maiduguri Blast

●Borno Deputy Governor: I thought I'd lost my legs

Michael Olugbode in Maiduguri and **Kunle Akogun** in Abuja

A 15-year-old suicide bomber yesterday afternoon attacked

the central mosque in Maiduguri, Borno State, killing five people. The deputy governor of the state, Alhaji Zanna Umar Mustapha and the Shehu of Borno, Alhaji Ibn Abubakar

Umar Garbai Elkanemi were in the mosque during the attack but narrowly escaped death.

Some worshippers who spoke anonymously said they were about leaving

the mosque after the Friday prayer when the attack occurred. The mosque often have in attendance the Shehu of Borno and prominent personalities on Fridays.

According to sources,

yesterday service was not an exemption as both the Shehu and the deputy governor were among the other notable persons in attendance.

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Bright Aikpitanyi
Driven by His
Lauder's Failings
Entrepreneur



MAIDUGURI BLAST

It was gathered that the suicide bomber lurched into the crowd of worshippers but was prevented from getting to the Shehu and the deputy governor by security men attached to the two men.

The subsequent explosion, sources said, led to his death and that of four others.

"The deputy governor and the Shehu were whisked away by their security details. The entire place was immediately cordoned off by security men and vehicles diverted from the entire vicinity," said an eyewitness.

Confirming the incident, the Field Operations Officer of the Joint Task Force in Borno State, Victor Ebhaleme said the blast led to the death of five people.

He did not rule out the possibility of the deputy governor and the Shehu of Borno being the targets of the suicide bomber. Ebhaleme said it was fortunate enough that the suicide bomber could not get access to them before the explosion went up.

He said: "Five persons have been confirmed dead while six others sustained injury as a result of the bomb blast

Also confirming the incident in a press release, the spokesman of the JTF, Lt. Col. Sagir Musa said: "At about 1410 hours a suicide bomber strapped with explosives detonated bombs very close to the Shehu of Borno and the deputy governor of Borno State and their entourage immediately after the Juma'at prayer.

"The JTF troops attached to the Shehu's palace prevented the bomber from getting to the Shehu and the deputy governor."

Musa further revealed that two soldiers that prevented the Shehu and deputy governor from being consumed were critically injured.

He said the area was immediately cordoned off and swept by the bomb disposal arm of the task force.

The deputy governor, later in an interview at the government house after the blast said: "I am alive. The Shehu of Borno is also alive; we give thanks to Allah because I thought I had lost my legs due to bloodstains on my cloth but as you can see nothing happened to any of us.

"The suicide bomber was a very young boy that came almost between myself and the Shehu of Borno."

Meanwhile, President of the Senate, David Mark has condemned the bombing attack on the Shehu of Borno.

Mark, who described the act as "callous", said attacks on places of worship are not only ungodly but "a huge sacrilege."

According to him, "the attack on the Shehu's Mosque has shown that Boko Haram in itself is not helping to propagate Islam contrary to the messages that had been churned out by the sect."

The Senate President commiserated with the government and people of Borno State and advised Nigerians to be security conscious.

He urged Nigerians to continue to provide information that would quell the activities of the Boko Haram sect to security agencies even as he called on those responsible for these murderous acts to have a rethink and accept dialogue.