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Buhari, Cleric in Narrow Escape as Twin Kaduna Bombs Kill over 100

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Scene of the explosion

- 24-hour curfew imposed
- I was the target, says former Head of State
- Jonathan, Tinubu condemn attack
- SSS: We are not overwhelmed

By John Shiklam , Onyebuchi Ezigbo, Senator Iroegbu and Jaiyeola Andrews

Once again, Kaduna city yesterday came under heavy attack from suspected members of the Boko Haram terrorist group, when they launched two bomb blasts at the city, resulting in the death of over 100 people.

A former military Head of State and chieftain of the All Progressives Congress (APC), Maj. Gen. Muhammadu Buhari (rtd), and a prominent Islamic

scholar, Sheikh Dahiru Bauchi, narrowly escaped being killed in the two blasts which occurred at Alkali Road and Kawo area in the metropolis.

Buhari was on his way out of town when the second blast occurred at about 2:00pm around a roadside market just before the overhead bridge. Eyewitnesses said the bomber must have been trailing Buhari's convoy as the explosion wrecked all the three Prado Toyota SUVs in the convoy.

An eyewitness said the bomber who was driving a Toyota Sienna car rammed into the three vehicles by the left side, causing serious wreckage to the vehicles.

One of Buhari's aides, who was riding with him in his official bullet-proof Prado SUV, was said to have immediately ferried the former Head of State out of the vehicle to safety.

Another SUV was later brought to convey him out of the area.

However, three of Buhari's aides and his security personnel were said to have been seriously injured in the blasts.

In a statement he personally signed in Kaduna, Buhari reinforced the suspicion that he was indeed, the target of the bomb attack, stressing that the assailants had planned to assassinate him.

According to the statement, "I am personally involved in a clearly targeted bomb attack today at about 2:30pm on my way to Daura.

"The unfortunate event, clearly an assassination attempt came from a fast-moving vehicle that made many attempts to overtake my security car, but was blocked by escort vehicle.

"We reached the market area of Kawo where he took advantage of our slowing down and attempted to ram my car and instantly detonated the bomb which destroyed all the three cars in our convoy.

"Unfortunately, when I came out of my vehicle, I saw many dead bodies littered around. They were innocent people going about their daily business who became victims of mass murder.

"Thank God for His mercy, I came out unhurt, but with three of my security staff sustaining minor injuries. They have since been treated in hospital and discharged."

About 50 people were said to have been killed in the blast. Most of them were said to be driving along the busy Kawo highway which is one of the gateways to the core northern states.

"Many of those who were killed were children and people who were driving in their cars. Some of them were children who were hawking by the roadside market," said an eyewitness.

The first blast at Alkali road occurred at about 12:30pm and was believed to have been targeted at an Islamic leader, Sheikh Dahiru Bauchi, who was at the Murtala Square for the annual "Tafsir" of the "Darika" Islamic sect to mark the end of the Ramadan fasting period.

An eyewitness told THISDAY that the suicide bomber who was riding on a motor bike was in the convoy of the Islamic leader who was just leaving the ceremony at the end of the event.

According to the eyewitnesses, "As the convoy of Sheikh Dahiru Bauchi was leaving the venue of the programme, there was this bike man who was riding his bike recklessly and he was looking restless, so the Jama'atu Nasril Islam (JNI) security stopped and asked him to get out of the convoy, but he was not willing to leave the convoy. So they stopped him and forced him out of the convoy.

"As he was leaving the convoy, he fell inside a gutter and the bomb exploded, killing him and many people."

Sheikh Bauchi is said to have been preaching against the Boko Haram sect. It was gathered that yesterday's blast was the second attempt by the Boko Haram sect at the Sheikh's life.

"I counted 35 dead bodies being loaded in ambulances. Many other people were injured," said the eyewitness.

However, the Kaduna State Police Commissioner Umar Usman Shehu said 25 people were killed in the Alkali road blast, while 14 people were killed in the Kawo blast.

The scenes of the blasts were cordoned off by security agents causing serious traffic snarl.

The bodies of the victims along with those injured were taken to the 44 Army Referral Hospital and Garkuwa Hospital in Kaduna.

The two incidents triggered fear in the hearts of the residents, as they quickly closed their businesses and rushed home for safety yesterday.

It was further gathered that some angry youths were seen throwing stones at the security agents who were patrolling the city.

As a result of the mounting tension, the Kaduna State Government while condemning the explosions imposed a 24-hour curfew on the city to ensure that

there is no breakdown of law and order.

The state governor, Alhaji Mukhtar Yero, in a statement by his Director General, Media and Publicity, Ahmed Maiyaki, said: "His Excellency, the Executive Governor of Kaduna State, Dr. Mukhtar Ramalan Yero has condemned the bomb blasts that occurred today in the metropolis, describing the acts as the height of 'cowardice' by those bent on creating tension in the state.

"Following the unfortunate situation, a 24-hour curfew has been imposed on Kaduna metropolis with immediate effect, to enable security agencies restore normalcy.

"The enemies of peace have visited us with their ungodly venom of wanton destruction of human lives. This blast, coming in the Holy Month of Ramadan is a clear indication that those behind the act have no iota of fear of God as they have none for the sanctity of human life."

The governor called on people in the state to see such unwarranted attacks on innocent people as aggression by evil against good that must be collectively condemned by all.

Yero said: "The time has come for all of us to eschew all our differences and confront these brazen attacks as united people."

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