

⑧ Scores killed, over 100 houses razed in Benue petrol tanker explosion

By Peter Duru

MAKURDI—NO fewer than 100 houses were razed, scores killed and many declared missing, yesterday, when a tanker conveying petroleum product exploded at Oshigbudu in Agatu Local Government Area of Benue State.

A source in the area told *Vanguard* that the tanker laden with petrol was travelling from Oweto and heading towards Otukpo when the driver lost control of the truck and it fell, spilling its content at the Oshigbudu/Obagaji junction.

According to him, "the whole thing happened suddenly and when the truck fell, the petrol spilt into people's houses and a nearby petrol station and there was a huge explosion.

"Many houses are currently on fire and most of those living in those houses did not escape because of the manner the accident happened."

Confirming the development, Vice Chairman of Agatu Local Government Area, Mr John Ikwulono, said the accident occurred at about noon.

Ikwulono said: "It was a tanker explosion and over 100 houses in the community have been burnt down and many lives have been lost.

"Though we cannot place a figure on the number of deaths, they are much. The truth is that the death toll will be massive because you know that in a house you might have up to 10 persons if not more than that.

"And the houses that were burnt down are more than 100. So in each of the houses, there must be a human being living or staying there. There is no way a house can be empty on a Sunday like this. So we have a huge crisis in our hands at the moment.

"We are calling on Non-Governmental Organisations, public-spirited individuals, State Emergency Management Agency, SEMA and National Emergency Management Agency, NEMA to come to the aid of the people.

"The survivors are current homeless and have lost all their property. Food will also be an issue for them because without a house how do you get food to eat. We are faced with a big challenge. The injured need help and the dead have to be evacuated without delay. So, it is a very serious situation for us at the moment.

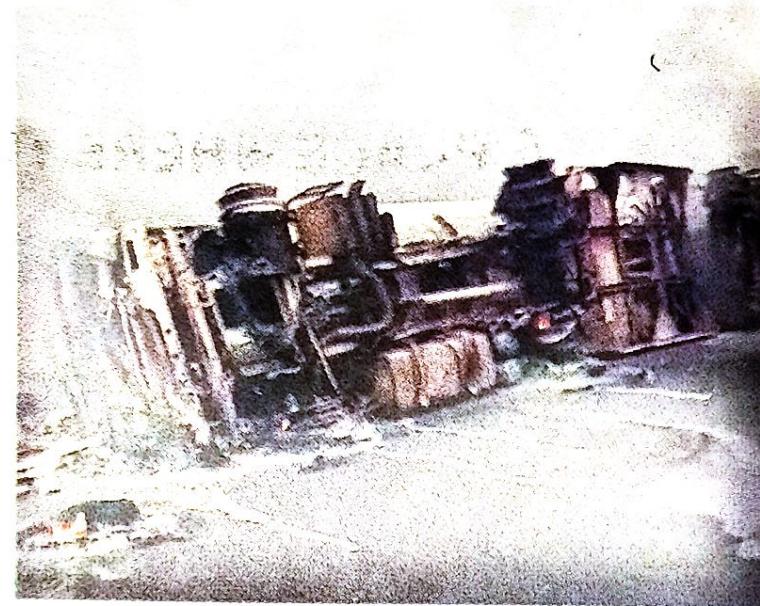
"I have already started seeing some of the burnt corpses and non of them can be identified."

He lamented that the locals were battling the inferno with water and detergent "but their effort is not making any impact though the nearest fire service station is in Otukpo and we were

told that the truck in Otukpo is broken down."

Contacted, the state Fire Service Director, Donald Ikyaa, said he just received the report but explained that the area (Oshigbudu) "is very far from the state capital."

He stated that the department did not have a substation in Otukpo, but noted that the fire service in Otukpo was owned by the Federal Government.



Scene of the tanker explosion. Photo: Peter Duru