

# Panic in Ebonyi as 'suicide bomber' blows self to pieces

By Peter Duru,  
Peter Okutu,  
Chinedu Adonu &  
Chinonso Alozie

**A**BAKALIKI—The spectre of suicide bombing that is synonymous with insurgency in the northern part of the country seemed to have made a landfall in the southern part of the country with what appeared to be an attempted suicide bombing in Ebonyi State yesterday. This first experience in southern Nigeria happened when the vest laced with dynamite the suspected suicide bomber wore exploded.

The incident, which occurred at Afikpo town in Afikpo North Local Government Area, came on a day police stations were again attacked in Enugu and Imo states.

Four policemen were killed in the attack on the police station at Iwollo Ogha in Ezeagu Local Government Area of Enugu State, while special forces killed two of the unknown gunmen in Imo, after they engaged special forces in a shoot-out at Orji Ploice station in Owerri.

Although the state Commissioner for Internal Security, Stanley Okoro, initially confirmed the suicide bombing, the state government later described the development as fake news.

**Suicide bomber tried to enter a school — Source**  
An eyewitness, who

disclosed to Vanguard that the incident in Abakaliki happened around noon yesterday, said: "The suicide bomber made an attempt to enter Amaizu/Amangballa Primary School but was turned back by the school security since he couldn't justify his reason for visiting. "He immediately started running inside a nearby bush before a big bang was heard."

The witness said residents scammed for safety when the bomb exploded but reconvened at the scene of the incident a few minutes later, only to discover the suspected suicide bomber lying dead in a pool of his own blood.

## Panic in Afikpo

A resident, who noted that the incident happened close to Eke Market, Afikpo, which happens to be the biggest market in the

area, said there was tension and panic in the community, following the explosion.

It was gathered that the upper part of the suspected suicide bomber's body was completely shattered by the impact of the bomb.

## A securityman's grenade accidentally exploded — Ebonyi govt

Reacting to the incident, Ebonyi State government in a statement by Mr. Francis Nwanze, Special Assistant to the Governor, Media and Publicity, stated: "My attention has been drawn to the news making the rounds in some sections of the media that there was an explosion of a suicide bomb in Afikpo, Ebonyi State, this afternoon (yesterday)."

"The above news is in

sharp contrast to the reality as the incident was a grenade of a security personnel carrying out his duties at the said location that accidentally exploded.

"A similar incident equally occurred in front of Ebonyi State Old Government House as some mobile police officers were servicing their APC machine.

"The first incident took the life of a passerby, while the second caused injuries on the affected person, who has been taken to the hospital, where he is currently receiving treatment.

"The general public is, therefore, charged to disregard the fake news as it is the handiwork of enemies of the state who are bent on causing panic where none exists.

"Furthermore, Ebonyians and residents of Ebonyi State are reminded that generating and spreading

of fake news aimed at causing panic in the state is actionable."

## All gatherings banned in Ebonyi

Also reacting, Commissioner for Information and State Orientation, Barr Orji Uchenna Orji, said the state government had banned every form of gathering in the state, stressing that "no procession in whatever guise is allowed at any point in time in the state for the time being."

He said: "In view of the new development in the tactics and dimensions adopted by criminal elements in their attacks on public facilities in Ebonyi State, I have been directed by the governor of Ebonyi State, Engr. Chief Nweze Umahi, to notify the general public as follows:

"That ban on movement into and out of Ebonyi State from 8pm to 6am is still in force. That no procession in whatever guise is allowed at any point in time in the state for the time being.

"That mass gatherings are not allowed except in essential service centres. That security agencies and EbubeAgu have been detailed to enforce all

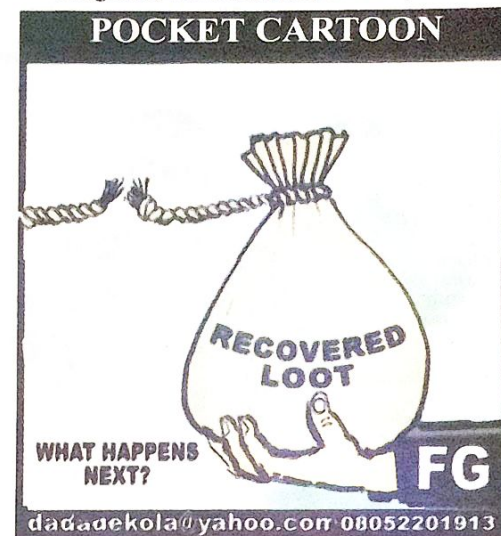
restriction orders issued by the state government. "That members of the public are enjoined to give our security agencies and EbubeAgu useful information on the activities of criminal elements anywhere in the state. Please, let us join hands to secure our state from the hands of enemies of the progress we have so far made in the state."

## Not a suicide bomber but a police officer — Police

The Ebonyi State Police command also debunked reports that the man who was killed in an explosion yesterday in Afikpo North Local Government Area of Ebonyi State was a suicide bomber. According to the Police spokesperson in Ebonyi state, Loveth Odah, the victim of the blast was a Policeman on duty in the area.

She said the policeman was a Mobile police officer on special deployment to Afikpo North Local Government Area of Ebonyi State.

She said the officer, Mr. Idi Aminu, died as a result



From left, President, Transitional Military Council of the Republic of Chad, Lt.-Gen. Mahamat Idris Deby Itno; Chairman, Presidential Council of Libya Mohammed Al-Menfi; President Muhammadu Buhari; President Faustin-Archange Touadera of Central African Republic and President Mohammed Bazoum of the Republic of Niger during the Extraordinary Summit of the Lake Chad Basin Commission (LCBC) in Abuja, yesterday. Photo: NAN.





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Continues from Page 5

of an accidental hand grenade explosion.

The Police said he was an Inspector of Police but residents believe he was a suicide bomber.

"He mistakenly hit the lead of his grenade which was hanging on his waist with his elbow resulting in the deadly explosion," she said.

She noted that the police officer was an operative of MOPOL 32 and not a suicide bomber as being circulated in the social media.

The spokesperson said his remains had been evacuated to a mortuary.

Odah further cleared the air on alleged accidental discharge by a police officer at Government House, Abakaliki, pointing out that though a bullet accidentally fired from an AK-47 rifle when police officers posted to the gate were cleaning their firearms, it never hurt or killed any of them.

### PANDEF condemns failed bomb attack

Reacting to the incident, the Pan Niger Delta Forum, PANDEF, condemned the failed attempt by an unknown person to detonate an explosive in a school at Ebonyi State, calling for more vigilance and protection of schools.

National Publicity Secretary of PANDEF, Ken Robinson, yesterday in Port Harcourt, expressed concerns that the security of the Southern part of the country is deteriorating by the day, adding that most of the terrorists causing panic infiltrated the region during the COVID-19 movement restriction.

Robinson said: "This is part of the concerns that we have been expressing. You know that at some point, there were reports of truck loads of young people moving from the Northern part of the country to the Southern states.

"It was almost an exodus, particularly South-South and South-East, and it was at that period of movement restrictions. So, the

concerns were, while there was restriction of movement, how come these people were moving?

"It was later discovered that they were concealed in trucks carrying food stuffs and cattle. So those concerns are now beginning to play out. Just yesterday, the governor of Imo State, Hope Uzodinma, said 70% of those involved in this act of attacks on security personnel and formations are not from the South-East.

"We cannot verify how he arrived at that figure, but it validates fears and worries that those who are in the Southern part of the country, disguising as herdsmen, are actually perhaps agents of terrorist organisations.

"This calls for greater concern, vigilance among our people and government of the Southern states of Nigeria. It again speaks to the fact that the ban on open grazing and movements of cattle by foot is a settled matter.

"The governors should not be worried about what the central government is doing because their comments are obviously discriminatory and biased.

"This a democratic republic, so we should stand firm. The Nigeria government must realise that Nigeria is at war with itself. Whether they accept it or not, persons are undermining the territorial integrity of Nigeria and they are pretending as if nothing is wrong, but everything is wrong.

"Our people should organise more. The government must now begin to unite more and put all necessary measures in place to ensure that these criminals and terrorists are stopped.

"The issues of internal security by the states arrangement is important to protect schools and other facilities."

### Beginning of bad times in the South generally — Middle Belt Forum

In its reaction, the Middle Belt Forum, MBF, said the incident marks the beginning of bad times in the Southern part of the country generally.

National President of the MBF, Dr. Bitrus Pogu, said in Makurdi that the development is a warning call on the Federal Government to frontally address the security challenges facing the country as it is getting out of hand.

He said: "That is to say what is happening in Borno has come to the South-East or the entire South fully. It is a warning call and the earlier we address some of our security issues and face it frontally, the better for everybody.

"Remember, during former President Jonathan's government, suicide bombing was very rampant. These people came in and I think they had some arrangements, I am sorry to say that, and the thing just ceased.

"Is it that they ran out of dynamite or out of bomb-making materials? I do not think so. There must be something going on which we could not see in the open, but it stopped.

"Now the introduction of suicide bombing and other forms of bombing in the South-East, to me, signals the beginning of bad times in the South generally.

"Before now, lets say recently, cries came out from everywhere that the South is being infiltrated by killer herdsmen, by bandits or whatever name they are called.

"Now, with the introduction of bombing whether it is suicide or planted, it has created a new dimension and the South needs to wake up. That is the organized crime happening in the north, particularly in the North-East is now rearing it's head in the South-East and eventually the entire South.

"So, everybody should be a suspect till proven innocent, and that is how they will survive. It is a warning and wake-up call on security operatives, on vigilantes, on everybody to install facilities that will forestall the bombing of people and facilities in the South. Let them learn from what happened in the north so that everywhere will be protected."

### Unknown gunmen burn down police station, kill 4 policemen in Enugu

Also yesterday, there was tension in Enugu as unknown gunmen attacked



The Police station attacked by unknown gunmen in Iwollo Oghe, Ezeagu Local Government Area of Enugu State.

a Police station in Iwollo Oghe in Ezeagu Local Government Area of the state.

It was gathered that the unknown gunmen who invaded the station in early hours of yesterday, killed four policemen and burnt down the station.

One of the villagers who begged for anonymity, disclosed that the attack turned bloody as four policemen were killed by the hoodlums who stormed the station in a Siena car and a bus.

"The men shot sporadically and we couldn't even sleep, as the gunfire persisted, we started seeing heavy smoke. The attackers were there for more than 45 minutes. When we got to the station this morning, I could count up to four dead bodies on the floor and the entire station had been razed. Their vehicles and motorcycles were destroyed," a villager revealed.

Enugu Police Command Public Relations Officer, ASP Daniel Ndukwue, who confirmed the attack, disclosed that the Commissioner of Police, CP Mohammed Ndatsu Aliyu, who visited the scene for on-the-spot assessment had ordered intense, discreet investigation to fish out the assailants and their cohorts.

The statement read: "The Commissioner of Police, Enugu State Command, CP Mohammed Ndatsu Aliyu, this morning, led members of his management team and Operational/Tactical Commanders to Iwollo Police Division for on-the-spot assessment, following attack on the Division by yet-to-be identified gunmen at about 0400hrs of today, 25/05/2021.

"The hoodlums, who came to the station in their numbers, opened fire on Policemen on duty, but were gallantly resisted and in the ensuing gun battle, several of the assailants escaped with bullet injuries. Unfortunately, four (4) of the operatives, who sustained severe gunshot injuries were later confirmed dead in the hospital, while parts of the station were set ablaze by the assailants.

"Meanwhile, the commissioner, while

condoling family members and close friends of the Policemen, who unfortunately paid the ultimate price in the line of duty; has ordered the intensification of already launched discreet investigation to fish out the assailants and their cohorts."

CP Aliyu appealed to law-abiding citizens of the state to promptly volunteer useful information that can assist the command in investigations.

He also called on operators of medical facilities in the state to promptly report to the Police any person(s) found with gunshot injuries.

Gov Ifeanyi Ugwuanyi who visited the scene yesterday, expressed sadness over the heinous act as he condoled and requested to meet with families of the slain policemen.

The governor ordered immediate reconstruction of damaged police buildings, replacement of patrol vans taken away by the hoodlums and construction of barricades before the police post.

### Special forces, hoodlums in gun battle in Imo, 2 gunmen shot dead

In Imo State, an unspecified number of residents were injured, while some were feared dead when hoodlums shot sporadically and engaged security operatives in a gun battle yesterday at Orji area in Owerri, Imo State.

Vanguard learned that the sporadic shooting by the unknown gunmen came after they had burnt Orji Police Division Station.

The gunmen drove into the different streets within the Orji axis while shooting sporadically, with one of them mounting guard on the roof top of the black tinted vehicle.

It was gathered from the residents that a business woman was said to have been shot dead around Orji market and another woman in her compound as she tried to hide from stray bullets.

A young man was seen struggling with his bullets wounds, while those on the run were said to have been injured while scampering for safety.

However, at press time yesterday, military men had

Okigwe road up-to the Orji axis where the incident happened, just as residents were forced to go to their houses and shut their businesses for the day.

Some group of boys around Orji area, were seen hailing and exchanging information and pleasantries with the hoodlums, giving the impression that they had prior knowledge of their operation.

Earlier, the Imo State police command said two hoodlums who operated as "unknown gunmen" that attacked Owerri Correctional center and Police headquarters were gunned down by the tactical unit of Imo State police command at Ochiai community in Awara, Ohaji/Egbema Local Government Area in the state.

The police said the two suspects, Uchenna Elendu and Elu Osinachi, died from the injury they sustained after engaging the police in a gun duel. Some of the exhibits recovered from the suspects were AK47 rifle and a cache of ammunition.

Explaining further how they were killed, the police said: "In response to the mandate given to the Commissioner of Police, Imo State, CP Abutu Yaro, by the Inspector General of Police, IGP Usman Alkali Baba, to ensure that the hoodlums who attacked the command headquarters Owerri and Correctional Centre, Owerri, are apprehended, the Command on May 24, 2021 at about 1820hours, carried out a well coordinated operation at Ochiai Community, Awara in Ohaji/Egbema Local Government Area, Imo State.

"The hoodlums were engaged in a gun battle. During the battle that lasted for about two hours, two suspects believed to have masterminded the attack at the Police Headquarters and Correctional Centre, Owerri on April 5, 2021, were fatally injured.

"The suspects are Uchenna Elendu 'male' of Umuokusu Ochiai area and Elu Osinachi 'male' of Umuobube Awara."

"The two suspects were taken to hospital, and the doctor on duty confirmed Uchenna dead on arrival, while Osinachi Elu who was in coma, was subsequently confirmed dead.

### PARA WATCH

### Naira down to N411.63/\$ in I&E window

By Elizabeth Adegbesan

THE Naira yesterday depreciated to N411.63 per dollar in the Investors and Exporters (I&E) window even as the volume of dollars traded (turnover) fell by 47 per cent.

Data from FMDQ showed that the indicative exchange rate for the window rose to N411.63 kobo per dollar from N411.50 per dollar on Monday, translating to 13 kobo depreciation of the Naira.

The volume of dollars traded in the window fell by 47 percent to \$58.88 million from \$111.53 million on Monday.