

Abuja flood kills intelligence officer, 3 others

....sweeps 26 vehicles, 166 houses

By Omeiza Ajayi

ABUJA—A top official with one of the nation's intelligence services was, on Sunday night, killed by flash floods in his estate, Trademore, on the Umaru Musa Yar'adua expressway, popularly known as Airport Road.

The flood also killed three others in the area and swept away 26 cars, while 166 houses were affected.

The intelligence official, who was said to be a top executive of the Department of State Services, DSS, was said to have gone out to get drugs from a pharmacy, while it was raining.

Eyewitnesses said he and his car were swept away by the rampaging flood, adding that residents of the area tried, without success, to stop the DSS operative from driving through the flooded area, but their warning came too late.

One of the residents said: "Lives lost, homes destroyed, businesses ruined. Cars uprooted and carried away and families rendered homeless. A man in a Rover was reportedly swept away by the flood into the bridge by the Police Station, and was found dead.

"A young lady, who served out her NYSC in an office years ago, is looking for the car she parked outside, last night. Probably her biggest investment from savings and loans.

"The owner of a supermarket in the estate had his home and cars destroyed, his family has moved into the supermarket for shelter.

"All the goods in Prognosis Pharmacy and Supermarket is out on the street this morning, damaged by the flood. That has been the reality in Trademore Estate for some years now.

"Sunday night's flood is arguably the worst since the over 10 years history of flood in the estate.

"Last year, the video of a man swept away by the flood went viral. Minister of State for the FCT visited, shared mattresses, cooking gas and cartons of noodles to families affected. No

lasting solution was sought.

"This year, as more estates crop up in and around Trademore Estate, a more devastating disaster has occurred. Blames are flying around on why the flood was more devastating than ever. They say government opened the dams last night and so the resultant flood.

"Some say it is the wall recently built on Imo Street as part of security measures to prevent the infiltration of herders that caused the flood. Another said the developer had recently sand filled areas that should be waterways and attempted to build on them, thus the resultant flood.

"My observation is that the key problem is the houses built on the water ways by the estate developer. The houses had been marked for demolition in the past, but there was no enforcement possibly because there was no compensation for affected families.

"NEMA van and staff were seen this morning (Monday) at 10am directing traffic and moving round affected homes. FCDA Development Control will soon follow. Will a lasting solution be proffered? Will the necessary political will be mustered to follow through? We can't be silent on this."

FCTA reacts

Director General, FCT Emergency Management Agency FEMA, Abbas G. Idriss in a statement, said: "Following long hours of heavy rainfall on Sunday 12th September 2021, Trademore, Light Gold, Wisdom Estates and Lugbe community of the Federal Capital Territory were heavily flooded- resulting to loss of lives and much property affected in and around the Estates.

"FEMA has established, in the course of rescue operations which began from 9:00pm of 12th September 2021 up to 13th September 2021 that four (4) persons lost their lives to the flood and the recovered bodies have been taken by family members for burial.

"Also, over twenty six vehicles- including an articulated towing van were swept away by the flood, besides a tarred road in Trademore Estate that was completely washed away as a result of the strength of the flood water. These losses are a summary of the impact of the flood

on the affected locations. In total, 166 houses were affected.

"The Agency is still estimating the volume of losses suffered as a result of this flood.

"In light of this unfortunate incident, I wish to convey the deepest sympathies of the Honorable Minister of the Federal Capital Territory- Mallam Muhammed Musa Bello, to the residents of Trademore Estate, Light Gold Estate, Wisdom Estate, Lugbe Community, affected individuals and families- including those of surrounding communities, over the loss of lives and property.

"Furthermore, I want to appeal to the members of the Community living along those axes to report any missing person or persons between the period of the flood till today September 13, 2021 to the FCT Emergency Management Agency.

"For this purpose, some communities in Gwagwalada- including Giri, Unguwar Dodo and the Nigerian Security and Civil Defense Corps Gwagwalada Command have been put on alert to report any case of floating body or property on the river channel for prompt rescue.

"Also, I want to appeal to all residents of the Federal Capital Territory Especially Developers to desist from violating the approved building codes in the Federal Capital Territory. We are also appealing to them to stop erecting retention walls to protect storm water from flowing. By doing so they are causing more havoc to the community.

"We also call on all residents to always call the 112 toll-free Emergency number to get prompt response when there is any form of threat or danger, as the Search and Rescue team of the Agency alongside other emergency stakeholders are on 24/7 alert.

"Lastly, as we enter the final phase of the rainy season in the Federal Capital Territory- a phase in which rainfall is always at its peak, I once again call on all residents to avoid dumping of refuse in drainages; clear all surrounding drainages and other blockages that obstruct the free flow of water to reduce flood risk and its negative consequences; avoid driving or walking through flood water; relocate to higher ground before being threatened by flood water for those who are living along the river banks; watch for sign posts on flood locations and also take seriously FEMA's early warning sensitization from the media and town criers."