

Four Feared Dead, As Plane Goes Missing

By Wole Shadare
(Lagos) And Alifa
Daniel (Abuja)

Flight Scheduled To Take Gov. Imoke To Abuja

AFTER three years of a clean slate, the country's aviation sector yesterday recorded another misfortune, as a light aircraft, a Beachcraft 1900D, belonging to Wings

Aviation was declared missing.

The aircraft, with three crewmembers, might have crashed after losing contact with the Port-Harcourt airport. The name of the pilot of the missing

aircraft was given simply as Captain Egbedi.

Former Governor of Delta State, Chief James Onanefe Ibori, is reported to own substantial shares in the airline, whose aircraft were used by President

Umaru Musa Yar'Adua during his electioneering campaigns in 2007.

Unconfirmed report said that the chartered flight from Lagos to the tourist resort of Obudu Cattle Ranch was on its

CONTINUED ON PAGE 5

Four Feared Dead

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

way to pick the Cross River State Governor, Senator Livel Imoke, to Abuja via Delta State where he was to attend a meeting of the South-South Governors.

It was gathered in Abuja that panic spread around government circles and among Cross River State indigenes when it was first learned that the craft had gone missing.

Imoke was to arrive in Abuja yesterday evening to prepare for an appearance before the House of Representatives Committee on Power, which had sought his presence to explain his role in the sector in the eight years administration of former President Olusegun Obasanjo.

According to the Managing Director of the airline, Captain Nogie Meggison, who briefed journalists at the airline's office at the General Aviation Terminal (GAT), Ikeja, the aircraft was on a routine flight from Lagos to Obudu Cattle Ranch, but lost contact with the Port Harcourt airport control tower.

He said: "The aircraft, twin turboprop aircraft with registration number 5N-JAH, which departed the Murtala Muhammed Airport, Lagos at about 7.35am with three crewmembers, was expected to arrive at Bebi Airstrip at approximately 8.45am.

"We immediately alerted the relevant aviation agencies including the Federal Airports Authority of Nigeria (FAAN) and the Nigerian Airspace Management Agency (NAMA).

Meggison disclosed that security agencies, including the police and military were alerted, stressing that, joined by gas companies, an intensive air and sea search was going on.

As at 9pm yesterday, the site of the crash had not been located, over 12 hours after the airplane was declared missing, bringing into memory the crash of a Bellview aircraft, which crashed in Lisa, Ogun State in October 2005.

The Bellview crash site was discovered close to 24 hours later, prompting stakeholders to shudder at the country's capacity to rise to the occasion during emergencies.

According to the airline chief, "One helicopter will join the search, which will continue throughout the night (yesterday) and we remain hopeful that the aircraft and crew will be found."

Meggison stated that the airline in its eight years of operation had never

recorded a single incident and "our pilots and other crew members are recruited from among the best in the country."

Confirming the incident yesterday, the Director-General of Nigerian Civil Aviation Authority (NCAA), Dr. Harold Demuren, described it as "very unfortunate," stressing that three crew members were inside the missing aircraft.

Demuren, briefing journalists in an emotion-laden voice, said efforts were on to locate the missing aircraft, adding that the incident was a bad spot to the clean record the country's aviation had recorded in recent years.

At the airline's office, the mood was that of sorrow, as the few workers initially declined to open the gates to the premises to journalists, who thronged the area for information on the incident.

Top officials of the NCAA and the Accident Investigation Bureau (AIB) were sighted at the office, making calls, to know if the aircraft had been found.

The Managing Director of the Nigerian Airspace Management Agency (NAMA), Captain Ado Sanusi, declined to comment on the missing aircraft, saying all enquiries should be directed to the Minister of State for Air Transportation, as he quickly walked away from reporters.

The *Guardian* gathered that Governor Imoke "was to stop over in Delta State for a meeting of Governors from his zone."

A highly placed Cross River State government official said: "He (Imoke) is well in Obudu; there is no cause for alarm. He has

been in Obudu with members of the State Executive Council (SEC)."

In the past one week, there have been conflicting details over the amount spent on the power sector in the Obasanjo years.

President Umaru Musa Yar'Adua had told a World Bank delegation that \$10 billion was spent with no commensurate benefits in the sector.

While the Speaker of the House of Representatives, Dimeji Bankole, said it was \$16 billion; Senator Ben Obi told *The Guardian* in a recent interview that it was \$15 billion.

But both the Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN) and the Accountant-General of the Federation announced downward figures of \$4.1 billion and \$3.2 billion respectively.

The Director General of the National Emergency Authority (NAMA), AVM Aliu Bida said the authority got information about the missing plane at about 11am and dispatched an helicopter to join in the search, which was still on at the time of the report.

A body, known as the Power Sector Watchers Group had, in a statement last week, frowned at the conflicting figures, stressing that it was more important to tell Nigerians why there was epileptic power supply.

It urged President Yar'Adua to recall his Senior Special Assistant, Engineer Foluseke Shomolu, who was sacked for writing a memo to another presidential aide, correcting the figure and putting the actual amount spent on power at \$5.16 billion.

It is against this backdrop that Governor Imoke is to appear before the House 10am tomorrow to tell his side of the story.

Nadina Restructures, Expands Its Board

AFTER 14 year, Nadina Industries Limited is reinventing itself by expanding its Board to include international business men.

The move, according to its Chief Executive Officer, Mr Oluseyi Osho, "is to steer the company into mega operations and position it for global relevance."

The new faces on the Board include Mr Anders Lindh, a Vice President of one of the worlds largest Pulp and Paper trading company, Ekman & Co. The new board has, as Chairman, Pastor Femi Atoyebi (SAN); Mosun Belo-Olusoga, a distinguished Banker and former

Executive Director of Guaranty Trust Bank Plc; Stephen Ola Jagun, President of the Nigerian Chapter of the International Facility Management Association.

The Board also include Mallam Adamu Sufi, Mrs Bose Osho and Mr Oluseyi Osho.

The founding CEO, Osho, is stepping down for a new man with experience in a multinational company who will be appointed within the next few weeks.

Nadina has an asset base of over N5 billion with very strong exercise books brands such as Winners, Laurels, Wisdom among others.