

NEWS

Wednesday, September 03, 2008

HOME

ABOUT US

SUBSCRIBE

MEMBERS

CONTACT US

THE GUARDIAN

[Worry too much?](#)

No more worry and fear with the EquiSync brainwave CD.
www.EocInstitute.org

[Fear Of Flying](#)

Find practical business information on fear of flying.
www.allbusiness.com

Ads by Google

Wednesday, September 03, 2008

ARCHIVES

[Read Past Issues](#)

NEWS

[National](#)
[Metro](#)
[Africa](#)
[World](#)
[Business](#)

OPINION

[Editorial](#)
[Columnists](#)
[Contributors](#)
[Letters](#)
[Cartoons](#)
[Discussions](#)
[Outlook](#)

SPORTS

[Home](#)
[Abroad](#)
[Golf Weekly](#)
[Results](#)

FEATURES

[Focus](#)
[Policy & Politics](#)
[Arts](#)
[Media](#)
[Science](#)
[Natural Health](#)
[Law](#)
[Education](#)
[Weekend](#)
[Friday Review](#)
[Executive Briefs](#)
[Fashion](#)
[Food & Drink](#)
[Auto Wheels](#)
[Friday Worship](#)
[Saturday Magazine](#)
[Sunday Magazine](#)
[Ibru Ecumenical](#)
[Centre](#)
[Agro Care](#)

BUSINESS SERVICES

[Property](#)
[Appointments](#)
[Money Watch](#)
[Market Report](#)
[Capital Market](#)
[Business Travels](#)
[Maritime Watch](#)
[Industry Watch](#)

C'River claims discovery of missing plane

From Anietie Akpan, Calabar and Wole Shadare

AFTER five months of futile search, the Cross River State Government yesterday claimed to have found the wreckage of the missing private Beechcraft 1900D aircraft on the rocks of Busi in Obanlikwu Local Council Area of the state.

This confirmation came from the Chief Press Secretary to the State Governor, Mr. Pat Ugbe, who however advised that the press should wait for an official statement.

The plane was reportedly partly burnt while the bodies of the three occupants had decomposed considerably exposing their skeletons at the scene of the crash.

A statement signed by Ugbe read in part: "The Beechcraft 1900D Aircraft belonging to Wings Airline which went missing on March 15th 2008 has been found.

"The ill fated aircraft was found by hunters at the thick rain forest of Busi in Obanliku Local Council Area on Saturday 30th August, 2008.

"Some of the items recovered from the crashed plane include the International Passport of the Pilot, Capt. Egbedi.

"Upon confirmation of this, the State Government notified the relevant Agencies, after which it was over flown by NEMA Helicopter on Tuesday, 2nd September, 2008.

"The matter has been handed over to the Federal Authorities and they have since mobilized resources to the site of the crash.

"The Cross River State Government has been unrelenting ever since, in the search for the aircraft, which has yielded the positive results."

"Yesterday, the state government dispatched a delegation led by the Special Adviser on Special Duties, Mr. Casmir Obok to the crash scene after allegedly getting information from the Obanlikwu Council Chairman, Dr. Godwin Amanke, that some hunters had found the wreckage of the missing aircraft.

The team included the state security adviser, Mr Bassey Okim; the state commissioner of police, Mr. Emmanuel Ezeozue and the airforce commander, Air Commodore A.A.Deji.

The plane which was en route the Bebi Airstrip, in Obanliku Local Council, near the Obudu Cattle Ranch in Cross River State, was declared missing shortly after take-off at the Murtala Muhammed Airport via Enugu International Airport on March 15, 2008.

The crash occurred barely 18 months after a military aircraft conveying military officers to the Obudu Cattle Ranch Resort for a retreat crashed in Kwande Local Council in Benue State.

The Cross River State Government had on May 11, 2008 ruled out the possibility of finding the missing plane in its territory after a seven-week futile search.

The state government subsequently announced the partial suspension of the search pulling out its over 200-member search team led by the Special Adviser to the Governor on Special Duties, Mr. Casmir Obok and the Executive Secretary of the State Emergency Management Agency (SEMA), Mr. Aqua.

However the state government left behind hunters and the local search teams to continue with the search: "We left behind our hunters and our local committee members and they should let us know of any information," Obok said.

The Minister of State for Transport Mr Felix Hyat had a day after the

lenovo



**CARTE 3G+
INTÉGRÉE**

**LENOVO
THINKPAD SL500**

A PARTIR DE 699 €HT

CLIQUEZ ICI



disappearance, announced that the missing aircraft had been found.

But the Yala Council Chairman, Fidel Egoro, had refuted the claim, saying: "I wish to refute what the Hon. Minister of State for Aviation said last night on Network. He said that the information as to the location of the wreckage of the aircraft was given by the local government.

"I want to say with every sense of responsibility that it is the farthest thing from the truth. The local government never gave any information on this matter. We had no information".

Meanwhile, the National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA) has dispatched a team to investigate the reports.

Speaking to reporters in a telephone interview, the Director of Operations, NEMA, Mr. David Shuaibu, said that the body sent a team since 10:30 a.m. yesterday to confirm the report and cannot confirm the said report for now.

He said that the difficult terrain of the area where the aircraft wreckage was allegedly found is one of the reasons why it might take some time to confirm the report.

The aircraft disappearance generated a desperate search by aviation parastatals, including the Search and Rescue team of the Nigeria Airspace Management Agency (NAMA) the Nigeria Emergency Management Agency (NEMA) which could not ascertain the location of the aircraft.

Reacting to the alleged finding, the Nigeria Civil Aviation Authority (NCAA) spokesperson, Mr. Sam Adurogboye, said the regulatory body had no official stand on the media report yesterday, adding that it does not spring into action based on newspaper reports.

Spokesman of Accident Investigation Bureau (AIB), Mr. Tunji Oketunbi, said that it was not the purview of the AIB to salvage the wreckage of the missing craft but to find out the cause of the accident and provide recommendations.

Meanwhile, the Minister of State (Air Transport), through his Chief Press Secretary, Mrs. Rhoda Ilya, yesterday said that the Federal Government would verify the claim of the finding before making a definite statement.

The Director-General of the Nigerian Civil Aviation Authority (NCAA), Dr. Harold Demuren, told The Guardian that NEMA will issue a statement on the issue.

Asked if the wreckage of the aircraft had been located, he simply said: "It appeared so."

The Nigerian government contacted the United States of America (USA) and other countries to assist in locating the missing aircraft.

Nigeria also contacted the Camerounian government to assist it increase the plane strained into its territory.

It was suspected that the 19 seater-aircraft which had three crew members might have crashed somewhere around the hilly Obudu Cattle Ranch, Cross River State.

The Director, Search and Rescue, NEMA, Air Commodore D.A Shuaibu said the decision to invite the US was made because of the superior equipment those countries posses, just as he gave the assurance that the wreckage of the light aircraft would be found.

While the search lasted, the State Security Service (SSS), quizzed aviation chiefs to determine their alleged involvement in the disappearance of the 19-seater turbo prop aircraft.

Among those quizzed were the Director General of NCAA, the Managing Director of the Nigerian Airspace Management Agency (NAMA), Captain Ado Sanusi, the Commissioner, AIB and Dr. Sam Oduselu.

Their interrogations followed allegations that the aircraft was ferried outside the country to impede investigation into alleged financial crime by one of the financiers of the airline, a former governor.

The investigation by the SSS came on the heels of investigation by a committee set up by the National Security Adviser (NSA) to investigate the failure of search and rescue and the misinformation on the missing plane.

The committee had allegedly released the report of their investigation to the Presidency, but the Presidency in a swift reaction, denied ever receiving the report, just as it denied ever ordering the arrests of the top aviation chiefs.

Spokesman to the President, Mr. Segun Adeniyi, in his rebuttal said it was inconceivable for the Presidency to order the arrest of the officers, "when the

President has not yet seen the report of the committee."

Speaking to The Guardian yesterday, President of Aviation Round Table (ART), Captain Dele Ore, however carpeted the committee set up by the Federal Government to investigate the missing aircraft.

The aircraft was declared missing since March 15, 2008 on its way to Bebi airstrip, Obudu, Cross River State.

Many faulted the interrogation of the aviation chiefs, insisting that the committee had usurped the power and duty of AIB which, by law, is saddled with accident investigation in accordance with International Civil Aviation Organisation (ICAO) regulations.

Quoting from ICAO Annex 13, Ore said the AIB "is mandated on the basis of his or her qualifications, with the responsibility for the organisation, conduct and control of an investigation."

Stating further, the former DC-10 pilot noted that the Bureau is equally mandated to conduct a process for the purpose of accident prevention which includes the gathering and analysis of information, the drawing of conclusions, including the determination of causes and, when appropriate, the making of safety recommendations.

Tools

- [Send to a friend](#)
- [Printer-friendly version](#)

© 2003 - 2007 @ Guardian Newspapers Limited (All Rights Reserved).

Powered by dnetsystems.net 