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Plane Loaded With Weapons Intercepted At Kano Airport

Saturday, 06 December 2014 22:03

 Written by John Ogiji (Minna), and
Abba Anwar (Kano)

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Frees 270 Inmates

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• Security Operatives Investigate Antonov Plane

ONE week after the bomb blast at the Kano Central Mosque, an airplane, fully laden with weapons, was Saturday morning intercepted at the Malam Aminu Kano International Airport (MAKIA), Kano. Meanwhile, armed men, suspected to be members of the Boko Haram sect, Saturday, invaded the medium-security prison in Minna, the Niger State capital, and freed 270 inmates.

Information from official sources said security alert system intercepted a suspicious Russian-made Antonov aircraft with a chopper tucked in it at the Aminu Kano International Airport, Kano. It was gathered that intense investigation, including using diplomatic means to unravel the mission of the aircraft, its origin and destination, is ongoing.

Competent security sources confirmed that the aircraft and crew are under protective custody pending conclusion of investigation. The incident took place around 9.30 am yesterday.

The Russian plane was said to have started



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from Bangui to Ndjamena, Chad. There was heated debate between the pilots and the Nigerian security operatives at the airport.

According to a source, the plane landed to re-fuel and were intercepted as they attempted to take off. It was further revealed that airport security did their best not to allow the take-off of the cargoes. As at the time of filing this report, the plane was still held up at the airport, where the pilots were being subjected to questioning by security operatives.

Efforts to get official confirmation proved abortive, even as security around the airport, especially the Tarmac, was immediately tightened.

Another eyewitness said the pilots looked so disturbed that they were even wearing a very sorry face. "From the look of things, there might be something fishy about the whole scenario," added the source.

Shortly after the interception of the cargo — as the social media began to feast on the story — people were seen in groups reciting the Holy

Qur'an in different parts of the city.

A cleric, who pleaded anonymity, told The Guardian that people would pray harder to seek Allah's protection and guidance. "As we are very peaceful, we should remain so and pray for Allah's protection in all our dealings," he urged.

The Minna prison break, which occurred at about 4:30pm yesterday, brought sudden fear upon residents, who were advised by security forces to remain indoors until further notice.

The armed men, numbering about 15, had invaded the prison and engaged five prison warders, who were on duty, in a five-minute gun battle, at the end of which the 'terrorists' succeeded in forcing their way into the prison and freed about 270 of the 323 inmates. Three prison warders sustained various degrees of injury from gunshot. They (the three prison warders) are being treated in an undisclosed government hospital in Minna, while a man whose identity was not immediately known was shot dead by the invaders.

The Guardian reliably gathered from an eyewitness that the armed men, after freeing the inmates, escorted them to a nearby bush and asked them to run for their lives. The armed men later snatched a Honda Car and escaped with it.

When contacted, the Public Relations Officer, Nigeria Prison Service, Niger state command, Mallam Rabi'u Shuaibu Mohammed, confirmed the incident, but said that it was an attempted jailbreak. But the Police Public Relations Officer in the state, Ibrahim Gambari said some arrests have been made.

Meanwhile, a detachment of the Military, the Police and men of the State Security Service have been deployed to the area, even as residents of the community hosting the prison yard have been directed to stay indoors until further notice.

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