

# Airforce Acquires 31 Aircrafts, As Alpha Jet Destroys Boko Haram Hideout

By **Our Correspondents** - September 29, 2018



The Nigerian Air Force (NAF) has acquired 31 brand new aircraft and reactivated 13 others in the last three years, the Chief of Air Staff (CAS), Air Marshall Sadique Abubakar has disclosed.

Abubakar spoke at the inauguration of 30 room transit accommodations for airmen and women and remodeled single quarters for officers at the 115 Special Operations Group in Port Harcourt on Friday.

He said the air force was also expecting delivery of additional six brand new attack helicopters procured from Italy.

"In the last three years, we have inducted 31 brand new aircraft and reactivated 13 others courtesy of support of President Muhammadu Buhari and members of the National Assembly.

"Also, aside the (12) Super Tucano aircraft from the United States, which we are still expecting; we are also expecting another six brand new helicopters from Italy.

"So, by the time you add up all that we are expecting; by the end of 2019, we should have quite a number of platforms," he said.

Abubakar said the acquisition of fighter jets and reactivation of other aircraft were part of ongoing efforts by the Federal Government to re-equip and professionalise the air force.

He said that security agencies had made so much progress by recapturing 20 Local Government Areas (LGAs) that were earlier occupied by insurgents in 2014.

"But today, there is not a single LGA that is under Boko Haram terrorists. Though, from time to time they attack some soft targets which are typical of insurgency.

"But to come out as an organised group to occupy territory; I think it is clear to everybody that we have gone past that stage.

"So, we are now consolidating what we have achieved in the few years, while so much is being done to make sure that the situation does not change for the worst," he said.

The air chief said that the recently established Special Operations Command and the Ground Training Command was all part of moves to end arm insurrection in the country.

Abubakar explained that aside procurement of fighter jets, attack helicopters and other military hardware that training and re-training and welfare of troops are being addressed.

According to him, the move is part of measures to boost combat readiness of troops when deployed for internal and external security operations.

He said the air force currently has 57 pilots undergoing training in Nigeria and South Africa.

According to him, 57 pilots are being trained in Kaduna; three in Kano, while seven recently graduated from Kano in August.

"Only last week in Lagos, we established a forensic lab for air provost. About 16 air provost are currently being trained there to handle some of the challenges that we face," he said.

"Another set of 140 air police personnel are currently undergoing special operations training to join our recently established quick response wings and groups," he said.

The Nigerian Air Force says its Air Task Force (ATF) of Operation Lafiya Dole has destroyed Boko Haram hideout at a settlement known as Bakassi near Daban Masara on the fringes of Lake Chad in the Northern part of Borno.

Air Commodore Ibikunle Daramola, NAF Director of Public Relations and Information, disclosed this in a statement on Thursday in Abuja, adding that the operation was carried out on Wednesday.

Daramola stated that the attack at Bakassi followed days of Intelligence Surveillance and Reconnaissance (ISR) missions.

He noted that "the attack at Bakassi was carried out on Sept.26, following days of Intelligence Surveillance and Reconnaissance (ISR) missions that led to the identification of a group of buildings and makeshift shelters in the settlement that were being used by terrorists as Tactical Headquarters from where they launch attacks against own troops' positions.

"Accordingly, the location was attacked by a Nigerian Air Force (NAF) Alpha Jet aircraft leading to damage of some of the structures and neutralization of several terrorists."

He also said that the ATF, in close coordination with troops of 145 Battalion Nigerian Army (NA), repelled a Boko Haram attack at Gashigar.

"Also, later in the evening on Sept.26, the ATF received intelligence report that a group of the insurgents in several gun trucks and on motorcycles were advancing for an attack on own troops position at Gashigar.

"Consequently, a fighter jet and helicopter gunship supported by an ISR platform, were scrambled to the location.

"The aircraft, in coordination with ground troops, intercepted and destroyed some of the gun trucks and motorcycles and neutralised some terrorists at the outskirts of the town."

He added that helicopter gunship subsequently carried out several follow-up attack passes and continued to engage fleeing terrorists.

He said that NAF, working in concert with surface forces, would sustain the momentum of operations.

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