

Navy releases names of crashed

helicopter's crew

• Pilot's widow: Why must he travel at night?

THE Nigerian Navy has released the names of its three personnel, who died in the April 20, helicopter crash in Imo State.

The Navy had also deposited the bodies of two of the deceased persons at the Nigerian Navy Hospital in Ojo, Lagos, ahead of their burial.

The three died as the aircraft in which they were conveying election materials to Owerri crashed at about 7.20 p.m. on the fateful day.

Naval authorities in Lagos said the victims included the pilot, Lt. Cdr Thompson Adekoya (37), who hailed from Ijebu-Ode in Ogun State.

The others are the co-pilot, Lt. Ishaka Yusuf (31), who hailed from Obehenre in Kogi State and Master Warrant Officer Ollaga Meme (43), the technician,

who hailed from Ogoni in Rivers State.

Speaking with reporters after the bodies of Adekoya and Yusuf were deposited at the Ojo hospital morgue, the Flag Officer Commanding (FOC), the Naval Western Command, Rear Admiral Ishaya Ibrahim, described the incident as a national tragedy.

The body of Meme was said to have been flown to his state, Rivers as it was closer to the scene of the accident.

Ibrahim said the officers died at a time they were needed most, adding however, that they died as heroes.

On the cause of the crash,

Ibrahim said it was still unknown, explaining that any reason adduced now would only be speculative.

The coffins bearing the remains of the victims were wrapped with the national flag.

Meanwhile, close associates of the two naval personnel, whose remains were flown to Lagos spoke on their last encounters with the officers.

Mercy Evans, who said she was the fiancée to Lt. Ishaka Yusuf, the co-pilot, told reporters that she spoke with the deceased at 5.30pm. on April 20, about two hours before his death.

"He called me at about 5.30 p.m. before they left for

Owerri and I asked him why they must travel at night and he said they were going for a national assignment," Evans said.

"I tried his line around 10 p.m. when I didn't hear from him. His phone was ringing but no answer.

I continued to call him till daybreak, but no answer until I got the information on Saturday," Evans said.

Mr Ayotunde Adekoya, the immediate brother to the pilot, Lt. Cdr Thompson Adekoya, said that Adekoya called his wife at about 6.06 p.m., barely an hour before his death as they were about to leave Port Harcourt for Owerri.

"The wife wanted to know why they were travelling in the night and he said it was a national assignment and they later departed at about 6.30 p.m. and that was the last we heard from him," he said.