

Tragedy as Army Chief Attahiru, 10 others die in Kaduna crash

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It was a tragic exit yesterday for the Chief of Army Staff, Lt-Gen. Ibrahim Attahiru. Attahiru died in a plane crash in Kaduna along with 10 others, just 115 days after his appointment.

Killed with him were three other generals, his aide de camp, his orderly, a major and four crew members.

President Muhammadu Buhari called them all heroes and said their death would not be in vain.

Similar tributes came from some state governors and many other Nigerians who poured out their emotions on social media.

The COAS and his entourage flew in a military Beachcraft 350.

The plane crashed close to the Kaduna International Airport and immediately burst into flames.

Time was about 6pm.

The Defence Headquarters attributed the accident to inclement weather even as the Chief of Defence Staff, General Lucky Irabor, directed that an Accident Investigation Board be constituted to unravel the immediate and remote cause(s) of the accident.

Names of the other victims of the plane crash obtained by The Nation are:

Brig. Gen. Abdurahman Kuliya (Chief of Military Intelligence); Brig Gen MI Abdulkadir (Chief of Staff to the COAS); Brig Gen Olatunji Olayinka (Army Provost Marshal); Maj. L. A. Hayat (ADC to COAS); Maj. Hamza; and the Ordely, Sgt. Umar.

The crew members were Flt. Lt. T. O. Asaniyi; Flt. Lt. A. A. Olufade; Sgt. Adesina; and ACM Oyedepo.

Attahiru, who would have been 55 years on August 10, had flown in from Abuja on his way to Zaria where he was billed to be the special guest of honour at the passing out parade of Regular Recruit Intakes of the Depot Nigerian Army today.

The Nigerian Air Force (NAF) and the Army confirmed the crash.

Spokesman for the NAF, Air Commodore Edward Gabkwet, said: "An air crash involving a @NigAirForce aircraft occurred this evening near the Kaduna International Airport. The immediate cause of the crash is still being ascertained. More details to follow soon."

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[mourn Army Chief Attahiru](#)**

The Nigerian Army also confirmed the death of Lt-Gen. Ibrahim Attahiru and 10 other senior officers in the plane crash.

The Director Army Public Relations, Brig-Gen. Mohammed Yerima, said: "The COAS was en route Kaduna from Abuja on Friday, 21 May, 2021 when the unfortunate incident happened.

"Details of the sad incident and burial arrangements will be communicated soon."

In a separate confirmation, Commissioner and Chief Executive Officer of the Accident Investigation Bureau, Nigeria, Akin Olateru, said eight people were on board.

"Beachcraft 350. 8 souls on board. Unfortunately, all dead," Olateru wrote in a WhatsApp note.

Sources at the airport told The Nation that an unexpected weather change and a rainfall had preceded the arrival of the plane in Kaduna.

"You know it rained, and the wind that came with the rain was a very dangerous one for an aircraft. That could be the cause of the crash," one source said.

He added: "However, in aircraft accident, nobody can really give you the cause of the accident with precision until investigations are carried out and reports are written.

"Ordinarily, military planes don't land here at the Kaduna International Airport; they use the Nigerian Air Force (NAF) base."

The Nigerian Air Force base is not far from the Kaduna International Airport.

The Acting Director Defence Information, Brig-Gen. Onyema Nwachukwu, said: "It is with a heavy heart that the Armed Forces of Nigeria (AFN) regrets to announce that this evening at about 1800 hours, the Chief of Army Staff, Lt-Gen. Ibrahim Attahiru, in company of his entourage, who were on official trip from Abuja to Kaduna, were involved in an air mishap.

"The unfortunate incident occurred after landing at the Kaduna International Airport due to inclement weather.

"The Chief of Defence Staff (CDS), General Lucky Irabor, has therefore directed that an Accident Investigation Board be constituted to unravel the immediate and remote cause(s) of the unfortunate accident.

"As we pray for the repose of the souls of our gallant and committed Chief of Army Staff and other personnel on board with him, the AFN solicits the support and understanding of all Nigerians in the face of this tragic incident.

“We wish to state that the Armed Forces of Nigeria remains resolute in combating the security challenges bedeviling our nation. The sacrifices of our dearly departed heroes will not be in vain.

“Meanwhile, the CDS urges all military personnel and their families to take heart and be consoled on this tragic loss.

“The CDS also reassured all Nigerians of the commitment and loyalty of the Armed Forces of Nigeria to the Constitution and Government of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, as it continues to carry out its responsibilities. God bless Nigeria.”

Attahiru's last mission to Kaduna

A top military source said: “The team led by Gen. Attahiru went to Kaduna to coordinate military action against bandits and boost the morale of troops.

“In the last 72 hours, Attahiru made shuttles to Maiduguri, Makurdi and Ibadan. He was always restless to make sure that the troops got it right.

“We can conveniently say he died in active service. He wanted results and as fast as possible. His tenure was short but eventful. He ran a tight schedule and he was hardly sleeping.”

A retired military officer said: “Even in death, Attahiru made history.

“We lost our 27th COAS on the 21st day of the 21st year of the 21st Century, and on Friday. What a date!”

Attahiru was appointed Chief of Army Staff on January 26, 2021 in succession to Lt-Gen. Tukur Yusuf Buratai.

He was born on 10th August 1966 in Doka, Kaduna North Local Government Area, Kaduna State.

He commenced cadets training in January 1984 and was commissioned as a Second Lieutenant in December 1986.

Read Also: [Buhari shocked, sad over death of Attahiru, others](#)

He had a master's degree in Strategic Management and Policy Studies from the Nigerian Defence Academy.

Prior to his appointment as COAS, Attahiru had served in Sierra Leone as a United Nations Military Observer, where he facilitated United Kingdom military engagement, Operation BARASS, in September 2000.

He was also an Operations Officer and later Company Commander in NIBATT 19 ECOMOG Operations in Liberia.

He was also, at various times, Commanding Officer 146 Battalion Nigerian Army (Operation HARMONY IV) in the Bakassi Peninsula, Commander 13 Brigade Nigerian Army (Operation PULO SHIELD), General Officer Commanding 82 Division Nigerian Army and Theatre Commander Operation LAFIYA DOLE.

Buhari declares Attahiru, others heroes, says their death is not in vain

President Muhammadu Buhari last night expressed sadness over the air crash that claimed the lives of the Chief of Army Staff, Lt. Gen. Ibrahim Attahiru, and other military personnel.

Buhari in a statement through his Special Adviser on Media and Publicity, Mr Femi Adesina, described the victims of the crash as "heroes who paid the ultimate price for peace and security in the land."

Buhari said he was deeply saddened by the death of the plane crash victims.

He condoled with the bereaved families, the military and Nigerians in general.

"While praying that God receives the souls of the patriots, the President says the crash 'is one mortal blow to our underbelly at a time our armed forces are poised to end the security challenges facing the country.

"The President pledged that the departed would not die in vain."

He's second COAS to die in air mishap

General Attahiru is the second Chief of Army Staff to die in a plane crash; the first being Lt. Colonel Joseph Akahan, who served between May 1967 and May 1968.

Akahan hailed from Gboko in the present Benue State. He died in a helicopter crash midway into the civil war.

Yesterday's crash is the third recorded by NAF aircraft within the last three months. The three accidents have claimed a total of 20 lives.

The first occurred on February 21, 2021 when a Beechcraft King Air B350i aircraft jet crashed in Abuja, killing all the seven air force officers on board.

The plane was on its way to Minna, Niger State, in connection with the planned rescue of some students abducted by gunmen.

The second accident followed on Wednesday, March 31, 2021. It involved an Alpha-Jet aircraft deployed for the anti-terror war against Boko Haram in the Northeast.

It had two men on board.