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Beechcraft plane: AVIATION OFFICIALS MUST QUIT— Senators

From AMOS DUNIA, Abuja

Senators led by the President of the Senate, Senator David Mark, yesterday took a critical look at the crisis in the aviation sector following the missing Beechcraft plane, with a call for the immediate resignation or outright sack of all officials involved in what they described as serious embarrassment and national shame.

Senator Mark, who presided during a motion on the matter moved by Senator Anyim Ude, noted that it was most embarrassing that a plane declared missing cannot be located four days after, saying that were Nigeria a serious country, some people would have tendered their resignation letters particularly as it related to the conflicting reports and inability to track down the missing Beechcraft 1900D with registration number 5N-JAH belonging to the Wings Aviation.

Information earlier doled out by the Nigerian Civil Aviation Authority (NCAA) and the Minister of State (Air Transport), Mr. Felix Hyat last Sunday stated that the missing Beechcraft plane had been found at a village called Igabu, in Iyala Local

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Government of Cross River that evening, saying that the three crew members on board were dead.

However, the Minister of State, Aviation on Monday through his Press Secretary, Mrs. Rhoda Iliya made a tactical withdrawal of the earlier statement by declaring that the plane in question had not been found after all.

President of the Senate, Senator David Mark who described the development as a national disgrace, stressed that in a country with an effective system, somebody ought to have resigned without waiting to be sacked.

“It is sad enough that that after four days the aircraft was declared missing, nobody has taken responsibility. In a civilized world, if such happens, someone should have thrown in the towel. Somebody should be courageous enough to take responsibility for this shameful act,” Senator Mark said.

In his contribution, Senator Smart Adeyemi said that the development is more of national shame than an embarrassment, saying that when his Committee went on oversight function to National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA), it submitted a report that the intervention Agency was ill-equipped to manage disaster in the country effectively owing to inadequate equipment. He added that the only rescue aircraft belonging to NEMA was under the supervision of the Presidency.

He said that the minimum rescue aircraft required by NEMA is six to be stationed in the six geo-political regions in the country to avoid the bureaucratic bottlenecks in the release of the aircraft by the Presidency.

In his own contribution, Senator Bassey Ewa-Hensaw declared that those involved in poor handling of the issue should be shown the way out of the system before they succeed in destroying the aviation in the country

“Every time there is a serious problem, you see NEMA distributing blankets. These people should be sacked. They are not responsible. They don’t know what they should be doing,” Senator Ewa-Henshaw said.

Also contributing, Deputy Senate President Ike Ekweremadu described the handling of the missing aircraft as an embarrassment to the country, saying that since the missing plane has not been found four days after, it is time the Nigerian

Airspace Management Agency, (NAMA) and Federal Aviation Authority, (FAAN) expanded their search to other countries by enlisting the services of their international counterparts to locate the missing aircraft.

Most of the senators that made contribution to the motion condemned the way the relevant agencies in the aviation sector handled the crash.

The Senate later directed its Committee on Aviation to liaise with the relevant agencies of government for briefing with a view to report back to the to the Upper chamber of the National Assembly appropriate steps to be taken in recovering the missing aircraft.

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