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Plane crash: We fasted, prayed to avert this tragedy —Agagu's community • As 15 die in plane conveying ex-Ondo gov's corpse

Written by | Friday, 04 October 2013 00:00 | font size | Print | Email | 5 comments

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We fasted, prayed to avert this tragedy —Family members A member of the late Dr Agagu's family, Chief

Sehindemi Oguntoye, on Thursday, said the community got premonition of a tragedy before the burial of the former governor.

Oguntoye, who is also the Ojomo of Osooroland, said the community had organised a prayer session to avert the tragedy.

"The community had been informed of an impending tragedy and the community had held a vigil, praying to avert it. The vigil even ended today (Thursday).

"It was a big tragedy for Iju-Odo community. We had, before the death of Dr Agagu, lost our traditional ruler, and now a plane crash which involves our loved ones," Oguntoye said.

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He, however, urged the community to be fervent in prayers to prevent further tragedies.

The News Agency of Nigeria (NAN) reported that residents of the community were in pensive mood, with many of them gathering in front of their houses discussing the incident.

Meanwhile, St. Paul Anglican Church, Iju-Odo, had been painted and renovated for the burial service scheduled for today, while major roads leading into the town had been rehabilitated.

NAN reported that the grave, located in the church cemetery, had also been decorated to give the former governor a befitting burial.

The reception ground, located at Manuwa Memorial Grammar School, Iju-Odo, had been decorated, with a big canopy erected in the compound.

As 15 die in plane conveying ex-Ondo gov's corpse

From Shola Adekola-Kehinde Akinsehinde And Moyosore Solarin-Iagos With Agency Reports

A chartered aircraft belonging to Associated Aviation Ltd, which had 20 persons and the remains of the late governor of Ondo State, Dr Olusegun Agagu, on board, crashed on Thursday near the international terminal of the Murtala Muhammed Airport (MMA).

The accident, involving the aircraft with registration mark 5N-BJY, occurred at about 9.00a.m, leaving 15 passengers dead and five others injured.

Mr Yakubu Dati, General Manager, Corporate Communications, Federal Airports Authority of Nigeria (FAAN), confirmed the figures of the dead and survivors in the accident.

The News Agency of Nigeria (NAN) reported that the crash happened 16 months after that of an MD 83 aircraft belonging to Dana Air, which occurred at Iju-Ishaga area of Lagos, claiming 159 lives on June 3, 2012.

Survivors of the crash were reportedly taken to the Nigerian Air Force Hospital for treatment, while the dead were also taken to its morgue.

Among the survivors brought to Lagos State University Teaching Hospital (LASUTH) were the son of the late Agagu, Feyi; Akintunde Akeem, Akintunde Taiwo, Akinsanya Femi, Chijioke Duru, Samson Toyin, and one unrecognised male adult.

Nigerian Tribune reliably gathered that Feyi was in a steady condition, as he only had a cast on his neck and no burns seen on him.

However, the MIC boss, the funeral home in charge of the burial ceremony, Mr Femi Okusanya, as well as his crew died in the crash.

A source close to the MIC boss, who also works at the funeral home and identified as Biola, disclosed that his boss, son and other crew member were all confirmed dead.

The crash happened within Sahara Group tank farm, one of the companies supplying aviation fuel to airlines, situated some 200 metres away from the perimeter fence of the international wing of MMA.

Dr Wale Ahmed, the Lagos State Commissioner for Special Duties, said the aircraft was transporting the casket containing Agagu's corpse from Lagos to Akure, ahead of his burial slated for the weekend.

He said the state government would perform autopsy on those that died in the crash before releasing their remains to their families.

NAN reported that the aircraft broke into two with its cockpit compartment seriously burnt, while the remaining part that included the luggage compartment, was slightly burnt.

However, the casket containing the remains of Agagu, kept in the luggage compartment, was intact, as it was not burnt when it was finally removed from the wreckage.

The casket was conveyed in a NAF Ambulance with registration number AF 054 -Eo1 to the nearby NAF hospital, a few hours after the accident.

The Associated Aviation counter at the Murtala Muhammed Airport 2 terminal was empty and deserted when NAN visited the place.

All relevant security and emergency agencies, comprising Lagos State Emergency Management Agency (LASEMA), Nigeria Security and Civil Defence Corps (NSCDC), members of the Nigeria Police, Federal Road Safety Corps (FRSC), Red Cross and Lagos State Fire Services, were present at the crash site.

Others included the Nigerian Air Force personnel and officials of the Lagos State Traffic Management Authority (LASTMA).

On ground to supervise the operations were Dr Femi Oke-Osanyintolu, General Manager, LASEMA); Mr Rasaq Fadipe, Director, Lagos State Fire Service and Mr Waheed Salau, the head, Airport police command.

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Fadipe said his office received a distress call around 9.30 a.m and he had to mobilise his men and equipment to the site and engaged in rescue and search operations

"We took three fire fighting trucks, each with 10,000 litres of water, which my men used to extinguish the fire that affected the cockpit compartment of the aircraft," he said.

NAN saw some officials of the Accident Investigation Bureau (AIB) retrieving personal belongings and effects of the passengers from the aircraft into their waiting vehicle for identification.

Some of the retrieved belongings were a small camera, laptop bags, one ipad, a travelling bag containing personal effect, a torchlight, a walkie talkie, a wallet and the case of a reading glass.

The security agents had to cordon off the area to be able to dismantle the luggage compartment and bring out the casket.

Emotion was high when the coffin containing the corpse of Agagu was brought out with little or no scratch, while those who were in the plane with the corpse were not so lucky.

At a press conference held by the aviation agencies, the Commissioner of Accident Investigation Bureau (AIB), Usman Muktar, confirmed that the black box had been retrieved, while investigation had since commenced to unravel the cause of the crash.

Muktar, who refused to give details of the victims, saying that the families needed to be contacted before any detail could be given out, however, said search and rescue had ended by 11.52 a.m.

The Assistant General Secretary of Airlines Operators of Nigeria (AON), Muhammed Tukur, blamed the crash on the unnecessary pressure put on the airlines by the government.

Also, in a statement issued on behalf of the Minister of Aviation, Mrs Stella Oduah, by her media assistant, it was confirmed that the plane belonged to Associated Airlines.

The statement said "the rescue effort secured six survivors and 14 fatalities," adding that the survivors were promptly transported to the hospital and were receiving appropriate medical care.



Jonathan orders full investigation

By Leon usigbe- Abuja

PRESIDENT Goodluck Jonathan has ordered a thorough investigation of the crash of the aircraft bearing the corpse of Dr Agagu.

In a message of condolence to the families of those who lost loved ones in the crash, the president noted that the news came to him as a shock.

A statement issued by the Special Adviser to the President on Media and Publicity, Dr Reuben Abati, in Abuja, on Thursday, said the president received with great shock and sadness, news of the tragic airplane crash in Lagos earlier on Thursday.

"On behalf of himself, his family and the Federal Government, President Jonathan extends condolences to all families who lost members in the plane crash and the government and people of Ondo State, who have been plunged into sorrow yet again, while preparing to lay their former governor to rest.

"The president feels and shares the grief and pain of the Agagu family as they grapple with the further loss of beloved relatives and associates so soon after losing their husband, father and mentor," the statement read.



The president prayed God to comfort the Agagu family, as well as their relatives and friends, and grant them the divine grace to overcome the trauma.

The statement said the president viewed the plane crash as "most unfortunate and regrettable, given the concerted efforts of the Federal Government to enhance aviation safety in the country."

He, therefore, ordered all relevant agencies to investigate it, "with a view to determining the cause and taking further actions, as may become necessary."

Black box retrieved —Aviation Minister

AVIATION Minister, Stella Oduah, on Thursday, said the ministry has commenced investigations into the plane crash at the domestic wing of the Murtala Mohammed Airport, Lagos.

Oduah, who made this known in Abuja, at a news conference, said the "Black Box" of the aircraft had been found.

The Embraer 120 aircraft, with registration number 5N-BIT, operated by Associated Airlines, on a private charter flight from Lagos to Akure, crashed shortly after take-off.

The aircraft was said to have been carrying 20 persons, including the crew, as well as the remains of the former governor of Ondo State, Dr Agagu.

Oduah said the Black Box had been handed over to the Accident Investigation Bureau (AIB) to determine the cause of the accident.

According to her, efforts were on to contact the families of the victims before releasing the manifest containing their names.

"The authorities are contacting families of the victims of this unfortunate incident and upon completion, will make information about the identities of the victims' public.

"The Federal Ministry of Aviation deeply commiserates with the families of the victims. Our thoughts and prayers are with them at this difficult time," Oduah said.

She urged members of the public to be patient while the investigation progressed and assured them that it would be thorough.

The minister assured Nigerians that the country's airspace "remains safe and secure."

Meanwhile, rescue coordination and trauma centres have been set up at the annex of the Nigerian Civil Aviation Authority (NCAA), to provide necessary information and support.

Burial plans to proceed as scheduled

By Yinka Oladoyinbo-Akure

THE burial plans of Dr Olusegun Agagu will go ahead as planned, despite the plane crash.

The family was said to have decided to go ahead with the burial since the son of the deceased, Feyi, survived.

It was gathered that the wife of the deceased, Olufunke and some members of the family were, at about 2.00 p.m on Thursday, taken to Iju-Odo, the hometown of the Agagus.

The people were said to have been transported to the place in order to participate fully in the Christian wake, scheduled for Thursday.

Speaking with the late Agagu's brother, Kayode, he said the development would not deter the burial ceremony, as family insisted that burial rites must continue, irrespective of the unfortunate incident.

Confirming the development, chairman of the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) in Ondo State, Ebenezer Alabi, said the burial arrangements would go on as planned.

He said the decision to go ahead with the burial was taken after a meeting with the members of the family.

"We just consulted with the family and family has decided to go ahead with the burial, moreso that the son of the former governor survived, the son-in-law survived and he casket did not scratch at all.

"So while the family sympathised with the those that lost their lives and the their loved ones, it has decided to go ahead with the burial as initially planned," he said.

Ondo thrown into mourning -Govt, PDP react

By Yinka Oladoyinbo-Akure

ONDO State, particularly Akure, the state capital, was thrown into mourning as the news of the plane crash filtered through the town.

Apart from Agagu's corpse, Feyi, his first child and the state Commissioner for Culture and Tourism, Deji Falae, were among those said to be on board the ill-fated aircraft.

Prominent indigenes of the state, led by the state governor, Dr Olusegun Mimiko; wife of the deceased, Olufunke, her daughters, among others, had converged on the Akure airport to receive the body when the news was broken to them.

Apart from state government functionaries, members of the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP), including Agagu's deputy, Omolade Oluwateru; governorship candidate of the party, Olusola Oke; former Ekiti State governor, Chief Segun Oni; his deputy, Tae Lawal, among others, were also on hand at the airport.

Immediately the news was broken, the governor went straight into his car and drove away, leading to speculations.

When the news was, however, confirmed, many family members, party supporters and sympathisers broke down in tears.

Dignitaries at the airport also boarded their vehicles, dispersing one after the other with the governor heading for the Government House, Alagbaka, Akure.

The mood at the Government House was pensive, as the governor was said to have betrayed emotion and wept profusely over the incident.

Also, the father of the commissioner that was involved in the crash, Chief Olu Falae, was seen surrounded by Akure elders and chiefs.

The former Secretary to the Government of the Federation was speechless and staring blankly into space.

At the Governor's Office and secretariat of the PDP, a lot of people were seen crying and wailing over the multiple death occasioned by the plane crash.

The crowd that had gathered at the Democracy Park, venue of the lying-in-state, was thrown into pandemonium and confusion, as people got wind of the incident.

The park, which had earlier been decorated and arranged for the event, was eventually deserted, as the people went home weeping.

At the Adegbemile Cultural Centre, which houses the Ministry of Culture and Tourism, some members of staff on hand were seen discussing the fate of the commissioner.

Reacting to the development, the state government, in a statement by the Chief Press Secretary (CPS) to the governor, Eni Akinsola, said, "the government received with shock, the news of the crash of the plane bearing the corpse of Dr Olusegun Agagu, as it was taking off from Lagos.

"A commissioner, family members, associates and other top government officials were also involved in the crash. Information available indicates that there were casualties and a few survivors of this unfortunate crash.

"We are, however, still expecting more information. No doubt, this is an unfortunate disaster in the life of our dear state."

In the same vein, the state PDP said it was shocked over the development.

A statement signed by the director of publicity of the party, Ayo Fadaka, said "we received with absolute shock, the news of the crash of a plane carrying the corpse of Dr Agagu and prominent

citizens of the state.

"This development, to say the least, is incomprehensible and unprecedented in the annals of our history as a state.

"In view of the development, we appeal to our party members and the people of Ondo State to remain calm, as we believe that relevant agencies of government will unearth the cause of this crash. We declare that any attempt to resort to violence will be negative."

Fear grips Abeokuta residents over Gbenga Obasanjo's rumoured death

By Yinka Olukoya-Abeokuta

PALPABLE fear gripped residents of Abeokuta, the Ogun State capital, when news filtered through that one of the children of former president, Chief Olusegun Obasanjo, Gbenga, was one of the victims of the ill-fated Associated Airline plane, which crash landed in Lagos.

Many residents expressed shock over the news, as they were seen in group discussing the incident.

Scores of residents thronged the Nigeria Union of Journalists (NUJ) secretariat at Oke-Ilewo, to confirm the authenticity of the story.

The former president, who had earlier been at a photo session with head boys and head girls from various primary schools at a leadership training workshop at the Olusegun Obasanjo Presidential Library, Abeokuta, apparently expressed shock when he received the news.

Obasanjo was bombarded with calls while the photo session lasted, as the expression on his face indicated that all was not well.

He was heard engaging in conversation with an unknown caller in Yoruba language and asking "Gbenga wo? Gbenga wa ni Abuja (Which Gbenga? Gbenga is in Abuja)."

Passengers scared of flying

By Ayomide Owonibi-Lagos

PASSENGERS who had previously bought tickets to various destinations were apprehensive, fearing to board plane.

The Murtala Muhammed Airport in Lagos was a beehive of activities on Thursday, following the crash of the plane conveying the body of the late Agagu and some of his family members.

While some passengers continued with their journey, some others decided to postpone theirs.

Speaking with the Nigerian Tribune, a passenger, Adeyemo Smith, who was billed to fly to Abuja on an evening flight, said he would rather delay his flight till next week.

"I am doing this for obvious reasons. This is one crash too many. I would rather allow things to cool off before making my journey, or I might just go by road," he said.

Another passenger, who gave her name as Ebube Okere, said though she had some important business to carry out in Port Harcourt, Rivers State, she would rather postpone her journey till the next day.

Lagos to conduct DNA to identify victims —Dep gov

FOLLOWING the air disaster of a plane belonging to Associated Airline in Lagos, the state government has concluded arrangement to conduct DNA test to identify the 13 charred bodies recovered from the scene of the air crash.

Lagos State deputy governor, Mrs Adejoke Orellope-Adefulire, said it had become imperative to conduct the test, since all the 13 bodies were burnt beyond recognition.

Speaking to newsmen at the Emergency section of the Lagos State University Teaching Hospital (LASUTH), on Thursday, the deputy governor added that seven other survivors, which included men and women, were also rescued and receiving medical attention at the hospital, while some are at the Nigerian Navy Hospital.

One person, according to him, was being treated at the burnt centre of the Gbagada General Hospital, Gbagada.

The deputy governor added that the state government was calling on residents, whose family might have been on board the aircraft, to come forward for medical processes, as this, according to her, would aid the DNA process.

"The bodies were burnt beyond recognition and we would like to appeal to members of the public, whose family might have been on the ill-fated aircraft, to come forward, so that necessary medical procedure can be conducted with a view to properly identifying the bodies," Adefulire appealed.

The deputy governor was joined by the state Commissioners for Health and Special Duties, Dr Jide Idris and Wale Ahmed; the Consultant Pathologist, Professor John Obafunwa and other top government functionaries.

Confusion may trail insurance compensation

By Chukwuma Okparaocha-Lagos

THE plane crash which occurred in Lagos, on Thursday, has brought another dimension into the Nigerian insurance business, as confusion may trail ensuing compensations.

Insurance experts who spoke with the Nigerian Tribune shortly after the sad incident, said the development was alien to insurance business in Nigeria.

They also noted that crashes that involved dead bodies might involve the judiciary to determine how the corpses would be treated.

Speaking on phone conversation, Mr Yemi Soladoye, the Managing Director of Risguard Insurance Brokers Limited, said while insurance law across the globe had a fundamental way of compensating those who lost their lives in crashes, as well as the wounded, cargo and aircraft hull, the involvement of Agagu's corpse in the latest incident might not be entitled to any form of compensation.

While commiserating with the family of the departed and the Ondo State government in general on the loss, Mr Soladoye noted that since the former governor had died, he was not entitled to what others that lost their lives in the crash would be entitled to.

He added that the corpse of Agagu "cannot be regarded as a cargo."

Similarly, the Director-General, Nigerian Insurers Association (NIA), Mr Sunday Thomas, while also commiserating with the affected families, said it would be too early to make any concrete statement about the crash.

He noted that the Nigeria insurance industry would "do its best possible to ensure that the right thing is done in accordance with international aviation insurance law."

The Embraer EMB 120 Brasilia

THE Embraer EMB 120 Brasilia is a twin-turboprop commuter airliner, produced by Embraer of Brazil.

After the success of the EMB-110 Bandeirante, Embraer began the development of their first transport category airliner in 1974.

The Family 12X comprised three models, with modular concept designs: EMB-120 Araguaia, EMB-123-Tapajós and EMB-121 Xingu. EMB-121 was the sole 12X model effectively produced.

Araguaia's name was changed to Brasilia in 1979 at the official launching of the project, when at a CAAA (Commuter Airline Association of America) convention at USA several suggestions from prospective operators were collected and incorporated to EMB-120 design.

Thus, a completely new aircraft – no longer related to the 12X family – was launched. No common parts from EMB 121 Xingu were used, and the capacity was revised from 24 to 30 seats. Originally designed to utilise the new 1500SHP Pratt and Whitney Canada PW115 turboprop, it was later upgraded to the 1892 ESHP PW118.

It was the closest to a modern replacement for the DC-3 and attracted interest from many regional airlines.

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