

Two die as helicopter crashes near Warri

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Reports late on Friday indicated that one of the Filipinos later died in hospital.

The black box was yet to be recovered at press-time.

Findings by our correspondent revealed that the helicopter was manufactured on October 28, 1998, while its serial number was 3146. The aircraft's type was AS 350 B2.

Our correspondent further learnt that the helicopter was heading towards Port Harcourt before it crashed on Delta/Aladja 330 Line of the Power Holding Company of Nigeria at 9.15 am.

The aircraft completely destroyed the line and G1W138 tower of PHCN before it eventually crashed. The PHCN's line collapsed on the dual carriage way leading to Delta

Steel Company, Ovwian-Aladja and consequently, the right wing of the expressway was closed to traffic.

The helicopter was badly damaged with its cockpit compressed with other parts of the body.

Although firemen from the Shell Petroleum Development Company later came to the scene, there was no report of a fire incident. Components of the helicopter, however, littered the scene.

Cell phones of the victims rang intermittently from what was left of the helicopter. The helicopter was conveying Nnaji, identified as the Managing Director of OAS, on a visit to Port Harcourt before the tragic incident occurred.

It was learnt that rescue operation was initially hampered by fear of electric shock because the helicopter was entangled by electric wire and it was only after the residents of the area ascertained that there was no current in the wires before they moved into the crash site.

Eyewitnesses informed our correspondent that Iroabuchi's remains were taken to Etefia Hospital along Udu Road while the Philipinos and Nnaji were rushed to Camp Clinic, owned by DSC.

However, an SPDC am-

balance later came to pick one of the expatriates to the firm's clinic in Warri.

The cash site was cordoned off by police and military personnel.

Top military and police officers visited the site while the Commander of the Joint Task Force in the Niger Delta, Operation Restore Hope, Brig. Gen. Alfred Ilogho, confirmed to newsmen that the injured victims were in a stable condition.

At the DSC's Camp Clinic, where Nnaji and one of the Philipinos, were recuperating, the doctor in-charge, Dr. Innocent Ejike, said they were responding to treatment.

Nnaji, however, declined to speak when Saturday Punch approached him for comments.

Also on Friday, power supply to DSC was halted as a result of the crash as one of the wires, which served as an alternative route to export power from Delta Power Station of PHCN to the national grid, was affected.

The Public Affairs Manager of Warri Business District of PHCN, Mr. Emmanuel Ibude, who led officials of the establishment to the crash site on Friday afternoon, said it would be difficult to transmit power to the national

grid in case of emergency in view of the latest incident.

Ibude also described the damage done to PHCN's facility as colossal, adding that it would cost millions of dollars to bring the line back on stream.

Meanwhile, Aviation Minister, Chief Femi Fani-Kayode, confirmed the crash at a news conference on Friday, warning that airline operators found culpable of criminal negligence would be prosecuted.

Fani-Kayode said officials of the Accident Investigation and Prevention Bureau (AIPB) and the Nigerian Civil Aviation Authority (NCAA) had been dispatched to the scene.

Director-General of the NCAA, Dr. Harold Demuren, also announced that helicopters would no longer be allowed to fly at night.

Giving details of the crash, the minister said the flight departed from Lagos at 7.11am after clearance under Special Visual Flight Rules en-route to Port Harcourt with estimated time of arrival put at 9.30am.

He said, "The aircraft established contact with Osubi Tower, reporting altitude 500 feet and estimates for Patani at 0754 and Port Harcourt at 0830UTC (09.30 local time).

"At 0854 local time, the aircraft reported position Patani, returning to Osubi, estimated time of arrival 0901 local time, due to bad weather at Port Harcourt. Osubi Tower cleared the aircraft to join the Osubi traffic circuit, left base Runway 24.

"At 0901, having no visual contact with the aircraft, Osubi Tower called the aircraft to request its position. The pilot reported nine miles from Osubi at altitude 200 feet. Asked for confirmation, the pilot corrected this to 500 feet.

"However, at 0904, the tower again attempted to contact the aircraft but received unintelligible response. Further calls elicited no response."

He added, "A few minutes later, phone calls were received from citizens in the Aladja area, reporting that a helicopter had crashed after colliding with high-tension power cables.

"Rescue and fire-fighting units from Osubi Airstrip and Shell Base at Ogunu rushed to the scene. The survivors and the body of the deceased person have been taken to hospital in the area."

Meanwhile, the NCAA said it has adopted the European Union's new security rules on liquids.

The authority in a statement signed by the Media Assistant to the Director-General, Mr. Sam Adurogboye, said the new rules was to protect passengers against the new threat of liquid explosives.

With this rule, passengers will be checked for liquids in addition to other prohibited articles at security points. He, however, noted that the new rules do not limit the liquids that travellers could buy at shops located beyond the screening points at airports, or on board an aircraft operated by an EU airline.

NLC tasks NASS on

fies new Plateau CJ

Jude Owuamanam, Jos

High Court, which considered a motion ex parte filed by the governor against the six legislators at whose behest the investigative committee was set up. The former acting CJ and seven-man committee were also sued.

The order granted by Justice Daniel Longjin of the Langtang High Court had granted the governor leave to enforce his fundamental right of fair hearing as enshrined and guaranteed by Section 36 of the 1999 Constitution.

Longjin further granted an interim injunction restraining the committee from sitting, pending the filing of the motion, on notice in accordance with the fundamental rights (Enforcement Procedure) Rules 1976 and the determination thereof.

PDP endorses Obi's removal

John Ameh, Awka

nor's impeachment.

The Peoples Democratic Party may have endorsed the removal of the immediate past Governor of Anambra State, Mr. Peter Obi, by a faction of the state House of Assembly on Thursday last week.

The party's Deputy National Chairman (South), Chief Olabode George, in a review of the political crisis in Anambra State in the last two weeks, said that the lawmakers "exercised democratic practice" in the

George, who led a delegation from the Abuja national headquarters of the PDP to Anambra State on Friday, ahead of the state's ward congress on Saturday (today), added that the party's concern had been to advise the assemblymen to apply the rule of law in their conduct.

He said, it was, however, unfortunate that the action

state, resulting in the wave of criticisms, which trailed it.

He commended the lawmakers for performing a duty they were convinced was their legislative responsibility.

The ward congress (held across the country last Saturday) was postponed by one week in Anambra State because of the crisis in the state.

George explained that the