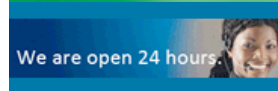


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Helicopter crashed on 15th trip of the day –Source

December 18, 2012 by Niyi Odebode, Fidelis Soriwei and David Attah [134 Comments](#)



Wreckage of the crashed Augusta 109 Helicopter in Okoroba, Bayelsa State

l credits:

The Augusta 109 Naval Helicopter, which crashed in Bayelsa State on Saturday, was on its 15th trip for the day when the accident occurred, a senior naval officer told *The PUNCH* on Monday.

Kaduna State Governor Patrick Yakowa, ex-National Security Adviser, Gen. Andrew Azazi (retd.); and four others died in the crash.

The aircraft had been shuttling between Okoroba and Port Harcourt, carrying guests to and fro the venue of the burial of the father of President Goodluck Jonathan's aide, Oronto Douglas, in Okoroba.

“The helicopter was made available for the use of guests at the funeral. One thing I can say is that it was going on its 15th trip when it crashed. I cannot say whether this could affect the performance of the helicopter,” the naval source said.

The source, who asked not to be named because he was not authorised to speak on the incident, also confided in one of our correspondents that investigators would also look into the possibility that the aircraft had been “overstretched” for the day.

But, the Nigerian Navy, at a press conference on Monday, said that the helicopter was air- worthy.

Spokesman for the Navy at the press conference, Rear Admiral Emmanuel Ogbor, said the crashed helicopter had more than 80 flight hours before its next scheduled routine maintenance.

According to Ogbor, who is the Nigerian Navy Chief of Training and Operations, the aircraft just had its last scheduled routine maintenance on November 19, 2012 and was cleared for operations on November 20, 2012 by technical support engineers.

“When the aircraft crashed, it was having more than 80 flight hours before the next scheduled routine maintenance,” he stressed, and that the captain in command had flown more than 800 hours, while the co-pilots had flown over 300 hours.

Ogbor added, “The Nigerian Navy will not want to pre-empt the findings of the investigations. All our pilots are trained in the best aviation institutions all over the world.

“An accident investigating team has been set up to probe the immediate and remote cause of the crash. Members of the team include aircraft investigation specialists, Augusta Westland (the manufacturers of the aircraft) and other aviation regulatory agencies as provided for by extant regulations.”

The Nigerian Navy has also defended the use of the helicopter during the funeral of Pa Douglas, saying the naval helicopters were employed in “multi-role military operations.”

These roles, it said, included surveillance, logistic support at sea, search and rescue and medical evacuation.

It added that apart from these roles, the helicopters were deployed in aid of civil authority in peace time.

“These include VIP movement and humanitarian/disaster relief operations,” Ogbor stated, adding that the Navy deployed three of its helicopters to Central and Eastern Naval Commands in support of its Niger Delta operations.

Meanwhile, wife of the President, Patience Jonathan, on Monday wept profusely for five minutes at the Kaduna Government House, official residence of Yakowa.

Patience was in Kaduna to commiserate with the family of the late governor when she broke down in tears.

The president’s wife, who arrived the residence at 1:30pm, was ushered into the home of the Yakowas by Vice-President Namadi Sambo and the Jigawa State Governor, Sule Lamido, and she burst into tears as soon as she sighted the widow of the late governor, Amina.

When she finally calmed down about five minutes later, she said, “I am sorry that I am crying. I cry because I am a woman. I know what she’s passing through. We came here to console her and the good people of Kaduna State.

“Governor Yakowa was a peaceful man, a man who was everything; a strong and hard-working man. My sister, we sit in sorrow. I want you to know that you are the mother and father of your children now. We would continue remembering you in our prayers.”

The President’s wife later wrote in the condolence register, “Our dearly beloved Governor Patrick Ibrahim Yakowa, we received with rude shock news of your sudden and painful departure.

“We, however, give God praise that you lived a worthy life full of honour and integrity.

“We are also gladdened that you were a true patriot who was devoted to the welfare of your people without respect for the divides and differences. Our prayers are that God, almighty will receive you into His peace and grant you sweet repose.”

Also at the Yakowas’ residence, Speaker of the House of Representatives, Aminu Tambuwal, said that the country had lost a noble gentleman and a seasoned administrator. He described the late governor as a peace promoter who was committed to the development of the state and the nation.

National Chairman of the Peoples Democratic Party, Alhaji Bamanga Tukur, said the late governor and the ex-NSA died at a time the nation needed their services most.

Tukur told Yakowa’s widow, Amina, that he knew the husband 25 years ago and that he fondly called him my “son.”

“I fondly call your husband my son. I know him over 25 years. He was the Commissioner of Industry when I was the Minister of Industry. He is never tired of asking of me or seeing me throughout the time I was in office as Minister,” he said.

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