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Owei

## Day NAF recorded another loss in Boko Haram war

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BY OUR REPORTER ON NOVEMBER 25, 2015

ABUJA METRO

... **Buries 31-year-old pilot, who died in crash**

By Molly Kilete

The Nigerian Air Force (NAF) was again thrown into mourning when the Chief of Air Staff, Air Marshall Sadiq Abubakar led officers to bury one of its finest pilots, Flight-Lieutenant Ebitimi Owei.

Owei died on October 10, 2015 in a plane crash, three days to his 31st birthday, in Adamawa State. The deceased had successfully carried out his assigned task to Operation Lafia Dole, in Borno, and was on his way back to Yola, when he met his untimely death due to bad weather.

A member of 56 Regular Course of the Nigerian Defence Academy (NDA), the deceased officer enlisted into the academy on September 27, 2004 and was commissioned into the NAF on October 4, 2008.

Late Flight-Lieutenant Owei, who had a Bachelor of Engineering degree in Electrical Electronics, was described by all as an intelligent, God fearing, caring, loving and very friendly officer, who was always ready to help his colleagues, friends and family members.

The pilot's death came as rude shock to everyone that knew him. They described as an excellent pilot, who would have successfully maneuvered the plane and still be alive, but for prevailing bad weather.

Many who witnessed the burial of the young man did not believe that he was dead, when the NAF made it public.

But reality soon dawned on them after the pallbearers, who were his course mates, marched into the cemetery with the white casket bearing his remains.

As soon as the band signaled to the pallbearers to march in with the body, most of the sympathizers lost control and wailed. His parents, who were present, could not hold back tears as they watched the young officers carrying the body of their beloved son. His wife wept profusely and was surrounded by members of the Nigeria Air Force Officers Wives Association (NAFOWA), who consoled her.

The mother of the deceased officer, despite the crushing pain of losing a son, also joined to console her daughter-in-law as she kept lamenting in her language and shouting the name of her son, and praying that he rests in peace.

Air Marshall Sadiq Abubakar, who was also the chief mourner, could hardly control his emotions as he bowed his face to the ground.

Present at the funeral were the Chief of Defence Staff, General Gabriel Olonisakin; the Chief of Army Staff,

Lieutenant-General Tukur Buratai and the Chief of Naval Staff, Vice Admiral Ibok-Ette. They were on ground

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to share in the grief of their colleague, Air Marshall Sadique Abubakar.

Also present, was the FCT Commissioner of Police, Wilson Inalegwu.

In his sermon, the chaplain in charge of the NAF Chaplaincy charged all present to fear God and keep his commandment.

He attributed the terrorism in Nigeria to lack of fear of God, even though those who are carrying out the act claim to be working for God.

He stated that, but for the insurgency ravaging some states in the North East of the country, the deceased officer would have been alive, adding that the late pilot had gone on a mission to contribute his quota to end terrorism, when he met his death.

The clergyman, while noting that human beings do not do God a favour when they fear Him, said people stand to benefit a lot when they fear God and keep his commandments.

He said: "If there was fear of God, we will not be burying this man today. If we fear God in our office, we will do the right thing."

With the sermon over, the preacher went straight into the main business of the day, when he invited a member of the family to perform the dust-to-dust rite.

At this point, the father of the deceased stood up, took the shovel that was stuck on a wheelbarrow filled with sand, and took the sand and poured into the grave as the clergyman made pronouncement for the rite.

The wife of the deceased, Mrs. Owei, at this point, requested that she be allowed to perform the act as her last respect for her husband, which was quickly obliged.

She was then escorted by one of the NAFOWA members, Mrs. Gbum, to the graveside, where she performed the ceremony in tears.

The climax of the ceremony was when the Chief of Defence Staff, General Olonisakin, presented the national colour to the next of kin of the deceased officer, his three-year-old son, Owei Junior.

When the master of ceremony asked that the next of kin steps out to be presented with the national colour, many expected the widow to come out, but when the little boy came out, sympathizers went into another round of crying as they concentrated their attention on the little boy, who apparently did not even understand why he was at the cemetery, let alone knowing that his father was dead and had just been buried.

Accompanied by his mother, he collected the national colours from the CDS, who after presenting it, paid him full military compliment.

Everyone present could see the sadness in the face of the CDS, as he presented the flag to the innocent child.

With the burial over, the service chiefs took time to commiserate with the widow and family of the deceased officer before taking their leave.

The late Flight-Lieutenant Owei was trained at home and abroad. He underwent his pilot training at Lackland Air Force Base, Texas in the United States of America, and thereafter, attended the Nigerian College of Aviation Technology (NCAT), Zaria, where he obtained his private pilot license.

He also attended F-7Ni pilot simulation training and F-7Ni pilot simulation refresher courses at Pakistan.

The deceased officer, who loved swimming and reading, held several appointments and served in different capacities in the course of his career in the Nigerian Air Force.

He served as Engineering Officer at 333, Logistics Group in Kaduna; Squadron pilot at 99 Air Combat Training Group, Kainji and 64, Air Defence Group, Makurdi, among other units.

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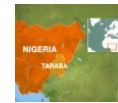
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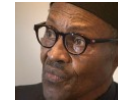
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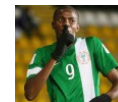
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