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Good Morning! Wednesday March 23, 2011

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### Pilot killed as Nigerian Air Force plane crashes

From Desmond Mgbob, Kano, Molly Kilete, Abuja and UCHE USIM, Lagos  
**Wednesday, March 23, 2011**

Tragedy again struck at the Mallam Aminu Kano International Airport (MAKIA), Kano, yesterday as a Nigerian Air Force fighter jet crash-landed at the airport, killing the pilot, Group Captain Saleh Abubakar.

The ill-fated jet had taken off from nearby 303 Nigeria Air force Flying School, Kano, situated a few kilometres from the airport only to crash-land soon after at about 12:48 pm.

Already, the remains of the deceased, who hails from Adamawa State, had been deposited at the nearby Armed Forces Specialists Hospital, Kano while the debris of the plane had been cleared by the military and NEMA officials.

The accident, like the fire accident that occurred at the airport, last week, threw the airport staffers into mourning.

The ill-fated jet, according to eyewitnesses, burst into flame as soon as it hit the runaway of the airport.

The deceased, who was a flying instructor at the 303 Flying School, Kano, died in the course of the training of his student pilots. The jet was said to be one of the new ones delivered to the school last week. It was alleged to have been bought from China.

“The student pilots initially went through the theoretical aspect of the training and later flew with their instructor on the same plane. When they came back, the instructor went on a solo demonstration, after which the student pilots would have done their own solo flight. It was in the course of this flight that the accident occurred,” the source said. At press time, security officials from the Nigerian Air Force have cordoned off the particular spot of the tragedy, even as military authorities have commenced full investigation into the crash.

Interestingly, the tragedy occurred a few minutes after the Minister of Aviation, Mrs. Fidelia Akubueze Njeze and other top officials of the nation’s aviation industry departed the same airport, through the same runway. These officials were in Kano State ahead of the planned commissioning of some of the structures at MAKIA as well as to commiserate with the airport over the fire incident, which killed a Federal Aviation Authority of Nigeria official, Alhaji Zubairu.

Meanwhile, hundreds of passengers, who were to depart the state through MAKIA, and from other airports to Kano have their travel arrangement temporarily suspended as the military investigators were still at the runway as at 3.30 pm when the Daily Sun visited the scene.

Aero, Arik, IRS and a few other airlines billed to take off between 3:30pm and 5pm could not keep their schedules as a result of the crash.

The Manager of the Mallam Aminu Kano International Airport, Kano, Alhaji Ali Nok declined comment over the tragedy, saying it was purely a military affair while the Public Relations Officer of the Nigeria Air Force in the state, Flight Lieutenant Obi Obasi said a press release would be issued from the headquarters of the Nigerian Air Force in Abuja on the incident, when the Daily Sun called him on phone.

In a statement signed by Air Commodore Yusuf Anas, the Air Force said the F7 fighter aircraft based in Makurdi recently relocated to Kano on a two-week flying training exercise before returning to Makurdi. The Chief of the Air Staff, Air Marshal MD Umar has already sent a delegation of senior Nigerian Air Force officers to commiserate with the victim’s family, the statement said.



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