

NAF Confirms Deaths of Pilot, Co-pilot, Three Others in Crashed Helicopter

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Ibikunle Daramola

Military chiefs pay condolence visit

Kingsley Nwezeh in Abuja and Michael Olugbode in Maiduguri

The pilot, co-pilot and three other crew members of the Nigerian Air Force (NAF) helicopter that crashed on Wednesday while providing air support for ground troops in Damasak, Borno State, were confirmed dead Thursday.

NAF had issued a statement on Wednesday, saying the helicopter gunship and its crew members were missing in action.

But the deaths of the crew members of the aircraft were confirmed by the NAF's spokesman, Air Commodore Ibikunle Daramola.

The Chief of Air Staff, Air Chief Marshal Sadique Abubakar, and the Chief of Army Staff, Lt. General Yusuf Buratai, have paid condolence visit to the Air Task Force of Operation Lafiya Dole in Maiduguri.

An Air Force statement said the remains of the fallen crew members have been recovered.

"It is with a heavy heart that I announce the death of the five crew members who were on board the Nigerian Air Force (NAF) Mi-35M Helicopter ,which crashed in combat yesterday,

while providing close air support to troops of 145 Battalion, Damasak in Borno State.

"The deceased personnel, whose remains have been recovered to Maiduguri, are: Flight Lieutenant Perowei Jacob – Pilot in Command; Flight Lieutenant Kaltho Paul Kilyofas – Co-Pilot; Sergeant Auwal Ibrahim – Flight Technician; Lance Corporal Adamu Nura – Gunner; and Aircraftman Meshack Ishmael – Gunner.

"These gallant fallen heroes made the supreme sacrifice in the service of our fatherland, for which the nation, owe them an unending debt of gratitude.

"The Chief of the Air Staff (CAS), Air Marshal Sadique Abubakar, on behalf all officers, airmen, airwomen and civilian staff of the NAF, commiserates with the families of the five fallen heroes and prays that the Almighty grants their souls peaceful repose.

"The CAS was in Maiduguri today, (yesterday) to convey the condolences of the Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces of Nigeria, President Muhammed Buhari, to personnel of the Air Task Force Operation Lafiya Dole over the unfortunate loss. While in Maiduguri, the CAS also received a condolence visit from the Chief of Army Staff, Lieutenant General Tukur Buratai.

"The NAF appreciates the overwhelming support shown by the public to the Service over the sad incident.

"We continue to solicit your understanding and support as we daily strive to ensure the security of Nigeria and Nigerians," NAF said in a statement.
