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Taraba gov in plane crash •3 occupants dead

Written by Wale Akintunde, Shola Adekola and Dare Adekanmbi
Friday, 26 October 2012

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Danbaba Suntai

TARABA State governor, Danbaba Suntai, was on Thursday night involved in a plane crash said to be piloted by him.

However, as of the time of this report, it was gathered that the governor

may have fractured his limbs and he is being attended to at the German Diagnostic Centre inside the State Specialist Hospital, Yola. Three occupants of the plane are however, said to have died.

According to sources, the incident happened around 8.00 p.m., at the back of NNPC depot, five kilometres to Yola airport.

Details of the cause of the crash were not known as of the time of filing this report but it was gathered that there were six passengers, including the governor, in the small aircraft when it crashed.

Immediately the incident happened, security agents cordoned off the area, making it impossible for journalists to have any information.

It was gathered that the governor acquired the plane at the cost of over one billion naira in the middle of this year.

It was learnt that Danbaba had spent quality time, despite his tight schedule as governor, attending the Aviation College in Jos, as well as another training school in the United States to learn how to fly.

The aircraft, a Cessna Caravan series which he was said to have purchased from a member of the National Assembly, was said to have been personally flown by the governor when the accident occurred.

He was said to be flying from Jalingo, Taraba State, to Yola, Adamawa State, but lost contact before the tragedy.

Aircraft are not allowed to fly into the Jalingo airport after 6.00 p.m. as flight operations are currently being carried out based on visuals.

As of the time of filing this report, information was still scanty as officials in the aviation industry could not provide adequate information on where the flight originated from.

A statement issued by the media assistant to the Minister of Aviation, Joe Obi, explained: "An aircraft, Cessna 208, with six souls on board, including crew, operated by the Taraba State government, departed Jalingo, Taraba State, for Yola this evening and reported contact with the Yola Control Tower (1720Z) and field in sight at 38 miles estimating landing at 1730Z.

"The pilot subsequently lost contact with Yola Control Tower and subsequent effort to raise the aircraft failed.

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For his housemanship, Suntai was at the Yola Specialist Hospital in Adamawa and his National Youth Service Corps (NYSC) programme at the State Hospital, Ijaiye, Abeokuta, Ogun State, between 1985 and 1986.

He later worked at the General Hospital, Ganye, in old Gongola State until 1991.

The governor rose through the political ranks, as he was elected chairman, Bali Local Government in 1989.

He was at the state civil service as a director-general in the Ministry of Agriculture and Natural Resources between 1994 and 1996.

Between 1999 and 2000, Suntai was elected the state chairman of the All Nigeria People's Party (ANPP); commissioner for education (2000–2003) and between 2005 and 2007, Secretary to the Taraba State Government.

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