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## Nigeria: Plane Crash Latest - More Trouble for DANA

BY HENRY UMORU, INALEGWU SHAIBU, LAWANI MIKAIRU, CHIOMA OBINNA AND DANIEL ETEGHE, 6 JUNE 2012

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Lagos — The Federal Government, yesterday, grounded Dana Airline following last Sunday's crash of its Lagos-bound aircraft at Iju-Ishaga area killing all the 154 passengers and crew on board as well as 16 others on ground when it landed on a two-storey building.

Special Adviser (Media) to the Minister of Aviation, Mr Joe Obi who confirmed the withdrawal of the airline's operational licence said it was "suspended for safety operational reasons". This is to allow authorities carry out a thorough investigation into its operations as well as the circumstances that led to Sunday's plane crash.

### Senate asks Demuren to step aside

The Senate had earlier advised the Federal Government to ground Dana Airlines just as it directed the Director General, Nigerian Civil Aviation Authority, NCAA, Mr. Harold Demuren to step down to allow for full scale investigation of airline operators in Nigeria.

The upper chamber in a sombre mood, yesterday, also demanded the release of previous investigative reports of air crashes in Nigeria from the Federal Government to prevent further air mishaps.

Adopting a motion entitled: 'The Crash of Dana and Allied Airlines Aircraft', sponsored by Chairman, Senate Committee on Aviation, Senator Hope Uzodinma and 29 others, the Senate stressed that Aviation regulatory agencies must be blamed for the ill-fated Dana crash which threw the nation into mourning and wailing on Sunday.

Senator Uzodinma while moving the motion said: "The latest crash is a clear indication of failure and or negligence of relevant regulatory functions in the aviation industry which if unchecked could lead to more devastating air mishaps in the future.

Uzodinma who also addressed journalists on the crash after the plenary said the Senate will ensure that those behind the mishap were brought to book and adequately punished, adding, "if this matter is as a result of negligence on the part of any of the parties, we will ensure that the people are adequately punished."

In their various contributions to the motion, the lawmakers concluded that regulatory agencies responsible for failing to do their work.

In his contribution, Deputy Senate President, Ike Ekweremadu who warned that regulatory agencies must wake up to their responsibilities, said: "I can see young people, children whose dreams and aspirations were dashed. Those whose contributions would have helped in national development were cut short. This is a very trying moment for us and it is very pathetic. We must draw lessons from this and confront the situation to ensure it does not happen again, my worry is that when this thing happens, information start coming of warnings about this."

### Disaster avoidable-- Makarfi

Senator Ahmed Makarfi who noted that the disaster was avoidable if only the management of the airline and regulatory agencies were alive to their responsibilities, said: "It was an avoidable disaster in my view and the view of almost all Nigerians. The warning signals were there to indicate how delicate the aircraft was but somebody must have certified it airworthy. It is condemnable to lose these lives. It is sad and must stop in this country."

The Senate President David Mark who presided, joined Nigerians in mourning the crash, while asking that Dana should stop operating immediately, just as he stressed that grounding Dana would show the seriousness of government in tackling air mishaps, adding, "we want this report on time and those in charge of these operations must step aside honourably. He said the need to ground Dana Airline should be communicated to the executive before tomorrow as a test of whether the executive will implement further reports."

### Lagos State govt insists on autopsy

Meanwhile, the Management of the Lagos State University Teaching Hospital, LASUTH has released a list of 29 victims that have been identified by their relatives even as relations of victims who thronged Hospital mortuary for possible collection of the bodies may not claim their corpses until autopsy is carried out on them according to Lagos State coroner law.

### Identified bodies at LASUTH

Some of the identified bodies at LASUTH as released by the hospital management include Martin Alade (M), Sonny Ehioghae (M), Temitope Ariyibi (F), Okocha Christopher (M), Stanford Obstrute (M), Ikpoki Obiola (M), Patrick Eze Okonji (M), Bassey Eyo (M), Kanguyi (Chinese (M)), Charles Ntoko (M), Dr Abiodun Jonathan



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Dana aircraft crash site.

(M), Ifeawaka Jones (M) Obot Emmanuel (M), Prof C.O. Onwuluri, Chinwe Uzoamaka Obi (F), Olabinjo Awodogbin (M), Anibaba Tosin (F), Obinna Akubueze (M) Nagidi Ibrahim (M), Mahmud Ahmed Dukawa (M), Ibrahim Jangana (M), George Moses (M), Femi Shobowale (M), Ailende Ehi Joel (M), John Ahmadu Hamza (D.I.G)(M), Kim Edger Norris (M), One female, two babies.

Vanguard gathered that 14 out of the 43 bodies at the hospital's mortuary were yet to be identified by their relatives.

Unfortunately, though the relations of the victims who have identified their dead relations corpses are becoming impatient asking authorities of the Lagos State University Teaching Hospital, LASUTH, when they will eventually take the corpses of their dead, the answer has been that they should exercise patience.

As the clamour to take away identified corpses continued yesterday at LASUTH morgue, Chief Medical Director, LASUTH, Prof Wale Oke told impatient relations of the dead, "already we have started doing the autopsy today, and we are going to do at least 12 autopsies per day".

As at 2 pm yesterday, Prof. John Obafunwa, consultant Pathologist and Forensic Medicine and Vice Chancellor, Lagos State University, LASU, led seven other pathologists to commence autopsy on the corpses.

Oke explained,"every corpse leaving our mortuaries will leave with a death certificate. And we cannot issue death certificates without autopsy," he said.

Calmed a bit by the CMD'S explanation that the corpses need to be taken away with death certificates, the waiting continued by victims' relations.

For many of the relations of the victims, the waiting game to collect their relations corpses has turned into indignation.

#### **Victims' relations besiege LASUTH**

Earlier in the day, those who have not identified the corpses of their loved ones were anxious to do that. Two family members of the deceased were allowed into the morgue at a time to identify the corpses of their family members.

A fair complexioned, middle-aged woman whose husband was a member of Dana plane cabin crew cried to whoever cared to listen, "let me see my husband's body first." Amidst the barrage of consolation by sympathisers, she continued,"I have heard, I just want to see his body." Another middle-aged man kept asking authorities of LASUTH, "when can we have our relation's body? Let's just have it and take it away."

Mr Izu Okafor, brother of a victim who died while sleeping in his bedroom in one the buildings the plane crashed into, late Nwabuwu Okafor, lamented the delay in taking away his brother's corpse. "I came on Monday to see my brother's corpse, but couldn't, I was told today by 2pm, I am still waiting," he said.

Intermittently, officials of LASUTH try to calm relations of the dead by explaining to them that despite the grievous and unfortunate incident that occurred, due process needed to be followed in handling matters arising.

Answering a question on how long it will take to hand over identified corpses to family members, CMD LASUTH, told newsmen that "in the next three days, all identified corpses must have been handed over to their families. Our team of pathologists have started work today. We are being careful not to hand over a corpse to the wrong family"

Meanwhile, the stench grew stronger yesterday from the LASUTH mortuary. Oke explained: "We have 43 dead bodies from the plane crash inside the mortuary plus the bodies that were there before. I don't think this mortuary has been stretched like this before."

Earlier, 29 bodies at LASUTH morgue were identified by family members, after which the family members were given forms to fill for identification process which also included taking passport photographs of family representatives and photocopies of their international passports.

Around 2pm, the remaining 14 corpses were brought to the back of the mortuary for identification. Relations, which included expatriates, milled around the corpses trying to identify them.

Face-masks given to people to use in the mortuary eased the pungent odour from the dead bodies.

A group of Chinese nationals who work with a popular construction company in Lagos seemed to be the most desperate among waiting relatives of the deceased.

Reason: They lost six colleagues in the crash.

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