



## NEWS RELEASE

### **OCTOBER 30, 2024 BRIEFING: UPDATE ON HELICOPTER DITCHING ACCIDENT NEAR BONNY FINIMA – FIVE BODIES RECOVERED SO FAR**

*[Abuja, Nigeria, October 30, 2024]*

*The Nigerian Safety Investigation Bureau (NSIB) continued its coordinated recovery operation and investigation following the ditching of a Sikorsky SK76 helicopter, registration 5N BQG, operated by **Eastwind Aviation**. The accident, which occurred on **October 24, 2024**, took place off the coast of Bonny Finima in the Atlantic Ocean. and involved eight individuals onboard.*

Today's efforts have yielded the following updates:

- **09:35 AM:** HD Steadfast vessel identified a body in the water. Recovery actions were initiated by deploying the Fast Rescue Craft (FRC) for retrieval of the body.
- **09:40 AM:** Antan HSE and Security teams were contacted to coordinate an evacuation plan.
- **09:55 AM,** Eastwind Aviation was contacted to explore possible air ambulance support from Caverton Aviation.

- **10:40 AM:** HD Steadfast deployed a drone to conduct an extended aerial search of the area to locate additional floating objects or bodies.
- **10:45 AM:** Sea conditions presented challenges to the FRC crew for recovery. Coordination with HD Steadfast allowed the team to use its crane to retrieve the body safely and transfer it to the FPSO deck, despite inclement weather.
- **10:49 AM:** Following Eastwind's notification that air ambulance providers were unavailable, NSIB engaged the Nigerian Navy for logistical support.
- **11:15 AM:** The body was successfully retrieved by the FRC and prepared for transfer to the FPSO deck.
- **11:41 AM:** An identification process commenced; while no clothing was found on the body, investigators examined specific characteristics for identity confirmation.
- **12:49 PM:** The Nigerian Navy was contacted to assist with body evacuation to land.
- **1:08 PM:** Eastwind Aviation provided crew photographs to support physical identification, which were forwarded to the field superintendent and Offshore Installation Manager (OIM) for verification.
- **2:44 PM:** The mortician arrived at the Nigerian Air Force base and was escorted to the Navy base by the Antan Flight Coordinator to prepare for the transport of the remains.
- **8:00 PM:** Divers encountered fragments of clean fibreglass and aluminium, likely from the aircraft. These findings will guide the search grid's adjustments as NSIB aims to intensify recovery operations within the accident vicinity.

## **ADDITIONAL RECOVERY EFFORTS AND EXPANDED SEARCH**

**Seabed and Surface Searches:** Divers have remained active on the seabed, conducting a thorough sweep based on recent information about the crash site's possible location. Calculations incorporating tidal flow direction, strength, and timing indicate the helicopter likely entered the water approximately 1,850 meters west of the initial body recovery area. The search was relocated accordingly, but no signal from the locator beacon was detected at this position. The team has since moved closer to the FPSO, where beacon signals were previously received.

**Search Area Expansion:** NSIB has mobilised two vessels equipped with side-scan sonar to broaden the search range. Four additional side-scan sonar units are en route from Port Harcourt and will be deployed tomorrow morning to enhance search coverage.

A total of **five bodies** have been recovered so far, though the fifth body recovered today requires specialised handling due to its decomposed state before being transported to the morgue

Director General of NSIB, Captain Alex Badeh Jr., commended the collaborative efforts underway, stating: “The recovery operation presents unique challenges due to the environmental conditions, but our team and partners are dedicated to bringing this mission to completion with utmost professionalism and care. We are grateful for the coordinated support from everyone involved in this recovery effort, including the Nigerian Navy, in ensuring a respectful recovery process. Our primary objective remains to uncover information that will fully explain the circumstances of this accident, and our thoughts continue to be with the families affected.”

The Nigerian Safety Investigation Bureau continues to work in close coordination with national and international partners to ensure a diligent recovery and investigative process in line with its mandate to promote transportation safety across Nigeria.

**Mrs Bimbo Olawumi Oladeji**  
**Director, Public Affairs and Family Assistance,**  
**Nigerian Safety Investigation Bureau**

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**About NSIB:** The Nigerian Safety Investigation Bureau is the multimodal transport agency charged with the mandate of promoting transport safety and conducting objective, thorough, and accurate investigations into transport accidents and incidents in Nigeria with the aim of identifying the probable causes and advocating for safety improvements based on our findings.

For further enquiries or media requests, please contact NSIB through [info@nsib.gov.ng](mailto:info@nsib.gov.ng) and NSIB\_Nigeria on its social media platforms. The Bureau can also be reached on its emergency line +234-807-709-0909.