

# Ondo Plans to Establish Helicopter Company

By Chinedu Eze , This Day Live

Ondo State Government has initiated plans to establish a helicopter company, and has already ordered two helicopters with the technical guidance from a Canadian, John Gullie, a former senior staff of Caverton, a major helicopter company in Lagos.

THISDAY gathered that the state government is planning to use the helicopters for surveillance, to monitor illegal logging and also may use it for oil operation, as Ondo is one of the littoral states that is oil producing.



*Helicopter*

Murtala Muhammed International Airport, Lagos.

Although the planned cost of these helicopters was not made available to THISDAY, but according to Business and Commercial Aviation magazine, May 2011 edition, a Bell 412 EP helicopters goes for about \$9.963,000, which is factory cost and this increases to \$11 million (N1,650,000,000) after it has been equipped.

This means that the two helicopters that would be acquired by the state government would cost Ondo state government over N 3 billion. Although the state government does not have a hangar which in accordance to regulations it must operate from, but THISDAY gathered that it would be operating from a hangar owned by a major industry stakeholder at the

John Gullie, who was in Canadian at the time of filing this story, has carried out similar business for another state government in the South West, which in 2009 acquired two helicopters, which it said that it would use for fire and crime fighting, but informed source said that the two helicopters are being used for oil and gas operations and is managed by a well-known helicopter company.

This seems to be attractive business venture and indications show that Ondo may also deploy the two helicopters to the rich oil rich Niger Delta, when they are acquired, no matter the reason behind their acquisition.

The Nigeria Civil Aviation Authority (NCAA) confirmed that the Ondo state government is now making efforts to meet the conditions for helicopter operating licence and the Authority said that if it meets safety conditions as enshrined in the regulations it would give the state the need certification to operate.

NCAA said that the agency's concern is safety and if the state meets the stipulated safety and other conditions, it would be given the operation licence.