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Madagascar minister swims for 12 hours after helicopter crash – 27th December, 2021

Level 4

Madagascar's police minister has beaten the odds to survive a helicopter crash. Serge Gelle, 57, swam to the mainland on Tuesday after his helicopter crashed into the Indian Ocean. Mr Gelle was one of two passengers who survived. They both swam for 12 hours to reach the shore. Gelle used a helicopter seat as a float. At least 39 people died in the disaster. A police spokesperson said the death toll could increase over the next few days.

Mr Gelle was in high spirits, but looked totally exhausted. He mustered up the energy to talk about his ordeal. He said he ejected from the aircraft after it hit trouble. A colleague spoke about Mr Gelle. He said: "Gelle has always had great stamina....He has nerves of steel." Mr Gelle said: "My time to die hasn't come yet." He has served in the police force for 30 years. The cause of the crash is currently under investigation.

Level 5

Madagascar's secretary of state for police has beaten the odds to survive a helicopter crash and a marathon swim. Serge Gelle, 57, swam to the mainland on Tuesday after his helicopter crashed into the Indian Ocean off the island's northeast coast. Mr Gelle was one of two passengers who survived the crash. They both swam for 12 hours to reach the shore. Gelle used one of the helicopter's seats as a flotation device. At least 39 people died in the disaster. A police spokesperson said rescue workers have found 18 bodies. He said the death toll could increase over the next few days.

Mr Gelle was in high spirits after his rescue, but looked totally exhausted. He mustered up the energy to talk about his ordeal, while slumped in a deck chair and still wearing his uniform. He said he ejected from the aircraft after he knew it was in trouble. A colleague spoke about Mr Gelle. He said: "Gelle has always had great stamina...and he's kept up this rhythm as minister, just like a 30-year-old. He has nerves of steel." Mr Gelle said: "My time to die hasn't come yet." He has served in the police force for 30 years. The cause of the crash is currently under investigation.

Level 6

A minister in Madagascar's government has beaten the odds to survive a helicopter crash and a marathon swim. Serge Gelle, the country's secretary of state for police, swam to the mainland on Tuesday after the helicopter he was a passenger in crashed into the Indian Ocean off the island's northeast coast. Mr Gelle was one of two passengers known to have survived the crash. They both swam for 12 hours to reach the shore. Gelle told reporters that he used one of the helicopter's seats as a flotation device. News agencies are reporting that at least 39 people perished in the disaster. A police spokesperson said rescue workers had retrieved 18 bodies. He lamented that the death toll could increase over the next few days.

Mr Gelle, 57, was in high spirits after his rescue, despite looking totally exhausted. He managed to muster up the energy to recount his ordeal to reporters. He spoke to journalists while slumped in a deck chair and still wearing his camouflage uniform. He said he ejected himself from the aircraft when he knew it was in trouble. He became police chief earlier this year after serving in the police force for three decades. His colleague offered a reason as to why he survived the crash. He said: "Gelle has always had great stamina in sport, and he's kept up this rhythm as minister, just like a 30-year-old. He has nerves of steel." Mr Gelle said: "My time to die hasn't come yet." The cause of the crash is currently under investigation.