

Thursday, February 2, 1989

Witnesses: Doomed jet 'backfired'

Investigation hampered by lack of black boxes, service records

ABILENE (AP) — Witnesses say a fuel-laden Air Force tanker plane was "popping" or "backfiring" before it crashed on takeoff, but the investigation may be hampered by the lack of a flight data recorder and the apparent loss of maintenance records aboard the plane.

Maj. Suzanne Randle, spokesman at Strategic Air Command headquarters in Omaha, Neb., said the KC-135A could fly if one of its engines was out. Its ability to fly with even less power would depend on a number of factors including weight, temperature, pressure and altitude, Randle said.

Their investigation could be hampered by the fact that no flight data recorder was aboard the modified Boeing 707, said 1st Lt. John Ames, deputy chief of public affairs at Dyess. Ames said he didn't know if a cockpit voice recorder was aboard.

was in many pieces, the largest of them the tail section.

"There were a bunch of small pieces everywhere," Matta said. "There's a few big sections, 10 to 12 feet long. There's a big wing, pretty badly burned."

Matta and military officials were meeting Wednesday to decide where to take bodies of the victims.

All 19 people aboard the KC-135A Stratotanker died when it crashed upon takeoff about a half-mile south of a Dyess Air Force Base runway shortly after noon Tuesday.

The Air Force said the plane that crashed had been in service since 1963 and was still carrying its original four Pratt & Whitney engines.

Sawyer officials said the plane's maintenance files were aboard before it crashed, which also could handicap the investigation.

The flight manifest showed 17 passengers from Sawyer, and two from Dyess, Dostal said. Seven were crew members, four were active duty military members, four were retired military, and four were dependents, including a boy between the age of 6 and 8, he said. One of the retired military members was from Abilene, officials said.

Skeet Jackson, who saw the crash from his back yard, said the plane never got more than about 60 feet off the ground.

The tanker, based at K.I. Sawyer Air Force Base in Michigan, stopped at Dyess en route for a training mission. It was scheduled to refuel some F-16s in the air before flying to Hawaii and then Guam.

Air Force personnel on Wednesday used stakes and red flags to map out about 2 square miles of scorched grassland and woods around the crash site, said Master Sgt. Al Dostal, a Dyess spokesman.

Three crew members were maintenance workers who accompany the craft during long flights.

"That left wing hit the ground and (crashed) just like these pictures of atomic bombs you've seen," Jackson said.

The plane was carrying military members and their dependents and carrying 30,000 gallons of jet fuel, officials said.

"Once it's staked out, it can snow and these flags have numbers, they can still see where things are," Dostal said.

Names were withheld until relatives were notified.

"The engines were backfiring or popping. He (the pilot) made a sharp turn ... and crashed."

Members of the Air Force Accident Investigation Board were expected to arrive at Dyess late Wednesday.

Air Force officials declined to speculate on what might have caused the noises.

Senator: Sex education classes also should teach abstinence

AUSTIN (AP) — Sex education in public schools should include abstinence as the only "100 percent, truly effective" means of preventing pregnancy and spreading disease, a state lawmaker said Wednesday.

Armbriester said the bill filing shows "clear legislative intent," and he hoped it would strongly encourage the Education Board to adopt abstinence curriculum.

Sen. Kenneth Armbriester, D-Victoria, sponsored a resolution heard in the Senate Education Committee calling for the State Board of Education to adopt curriculum teaching abstinence, self-control, ethics and ways to resist peer pressure to have sex.

"I am concerned as a father about what is being instructed in public schools," Armbriester, who has a daughter, 13, and a son, 16, said. "I know what we instruct in our home and I know the training they get in our church."

"We're just saying that if you are teaching all these other things, you should at least have a unit of instruction to show that there is only one, 100 percent truly effective method in the prevention of unwanted pregnancy and disease control, and that's abstinence," Armbriester told the committee.

"I just want to ensure that the information they're receiving in school also includes that abstinence is a desirable condition of their age group," Armbriester said.

The resolution asks that abstinence be included in existing sex education courses. With it, Armbriester filed a bill that would force the Education Board to adopt abstinence curriculum.

Students should be taught self-control, discipline and ethics in making decisions on sex, the resolution says. It also asks that schools teach failure rates of birth control methods and of condoms in preventing disease transmission.

Some committee members opposed legislation requiring abstinence instruction, saying lawmakers should not mandate curriculum.

Schools should also teach laws about financial responsibilities involved in pregnancy and childbearing, and should show students how to rebuff unwanted sexual advances and resist peer pressure, the resolution says.

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Teleconference discusses black history, concludes 'Still much further to go'

By Richard Tijerina

STAFF WRITER

Blacks have made a tremendous impact on American society over the past century, but they still have much further to go, according to a teleconference concerning the historical importance of blacks in the country.

pitot Ballet Company, said blacks in the entertainment industry have to finally decide that no one can make a difference for them except themselves.

"We can't depend on someone else," she said. "We have to make our own companies and our own small groups, and I see that happening. We have wonderful dancers, composers and actors. We have it all — we just have to pull it together."

"Beyond the Dream: A Celebration of Black History" served as the national kickoff of February as Black History Month. The teleconference documented achievements blacks have made on society through education, politics, economics, the military, the arts, sports, entertainment and social issues, and was presented at Texas A&M by the Black Awareness Committee.

Sen. Cleo Fields, D-La., said the major problem facing blacks today is the registration of voters. "The way you inspire young people to participate directly is by urging them to take part at an early age," Fields said. "It's not age, it's attitude."

Several speakers in the teleconference said they felt the progress blacks have made is small compared to the goals that future generations will accomplish.

Fields said it is important to realize that the influence of blacks in politics would not be what it is today if it was not for early black leaders who paved the way.

Mary Futrell, president of the National Education Association, said she felt black children deliberately perform poorly in school because they feel it is expected of them to do so.

"You have to understand the history of black politics," he said. "Booker T. (Washington) started to teach so Rosa Parks could take her seat so Martin Luther (King) could march. He marched and marched so Jesse Jackson could run. Jesse ran so we could win."

As the military derivative of the Boeing 707, the first commercially successful jet airliner, the Stratotanker has earned a reputation as a workhorse that is generally safe to fly.

Dorothy Brunson, the founder and president of Brunson Communications, said she believes the problem with blacks in business is that blacks simply don't believe they can make an impact on the business world.

But an aviation expert said the plane is not without its faults.

"(Blacks) have a tradition which comes out of the church that preached humility," Brunson said. "We have not understood how we can impact our own environment. We don't know what we can accomplish. We don't need any more entertainers or athletes — we need business people."

The KC-135 is the backbone of the Air Force tanker fleet, which has about 500 of them averaging 29 years of age.

Sybil Mobley, dean of the School of Business at Florida A&M University, said many black-owned businesses fail today because they are debt-financed. She said blacks must start businesses that make sense in order to succeed.

Documented cases have shown that Stratotankers exceptionally full of fuel have "never become airborne or once they did, never had enough airspeed to fly and crashed with catastrophic results," Hopkins said.

"I sang in every state in this union," Duncan said. "I had all this money in my pocket, but there was not a restaurant in town where I could eat, there was not a bathroom I could go to. Those are the things that hurt."

Doris Jones, founder of the Ca-

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