

# Chinese jet crashes into village, 205 dead

TAIPEI, Taiwan (AP) — A China Airlines jet trying to land in fog crashed into a country neighborhood Monday, ripping the roofs off houses before skidding into a rice paddy and erupting in flames. Authorities said all 196 aboard and nine people on the ground were killed.

Firefighters went house to house in the blackened neighborhood, putting out the flames licking doors and windows and searching for survivors. Searchlights illuminated a life raft from the Airbus A-300, wrapped around a broken tree stump. Seats from the plane were scattered in the dirt, one with a body trapped beneath it.

China Airlines said the dead included the governor of Taiwan's Central Bank and other key financial officials; four Americans; and many Taiwanese families returning from vacations in Bali. Victims on the ground included a 2-month-old baby.

Witnesses said the plane hit several hundreds yards short of the runway at Chiang Kai-shek airport, 25 miles west of Taipei. It tore through homes along a highway before coming to rest in flames in the rice paddy.

"It came down — I heard a loud explosion and a

fireball. And then I thought the chances for any survivors were slim," said a vendor in the area, who identified himself only as Mr. Yang.

The fiery impact scattered charred bodies and body parts throughout the area. Authorities sealed off the neighborhood, leaving families of passengers to congregate at hospitals and the airport. Relatives broke into tears and fell into one another's arms as the extent of the disaster hit them; one woman collapsed to the floor.

"They all went to Bali on a trip — and they are all dead," said one woman, whose four children were on the flight.

Rescue workers on the scene said they had given up looking for survivors, but the deputy director-general of Taiwan's Civil Aeronautics Administration, Chang Kuo-cheng, said he still hoped to find survivors among the 182 passengers and 14 crew members.

Airport officials said two flight data recorders were recovered and were being analyzed to help determine the cause of the crash.

The twin-engine Airbus went down while attempting to land on a second approach at 8:09 p.m.

local time at the airport's northern runway, the Taipei-based China Airlines reported.

Heavy fog was reported around the airport throughout the afternoon and evening, and a light rain was falling at the time of the crash.

The plane had been asked to make the second approach due to poor visibility, said Hamilton Liu, a China Airlines spokesperson. Earlier, the Civil Aeronautics Administration had said the visibility was reported to be adequate.

Tsai Twei, director of the Civil Aeronautics Administration, resigned to take moral responsibility for the crash, which was the worst in the airport's history. It came after Taiwan's flagship carrier embarked on an extensive safety campaign that followed a crash in Japan in 1994 that claimed 264 lives.

Among the passengers on flight CI-676 were Sheu Yuan-dong, governor of Taiwan's Central Bank, his wife, and four other finance officials returning from a conference in Bali. They included Chen Huang, head of the bank's Department of Foreign Exchange, and Chien Chi-min, head of the Department of Economic Research.



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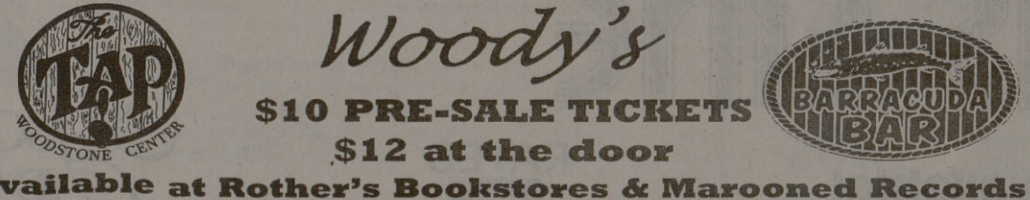


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