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Tuesday, August 5, 2003

Small plane crashes, two dead

By Noreen Gillespie
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

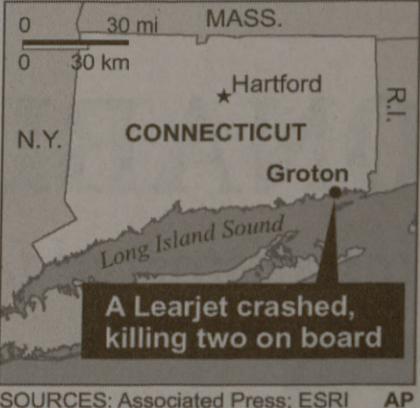
GROTON, Conn. — A small business jet crashed into three houses Monday, setting two of them on fire, then cartwheeled into a river less than a mile short of an airport. Both people aboard the plane were killed, authorities said.

Nobody on the ground was seriously hurt, although one woman was treated for minor injuries after she jumped out a window of her home, Poquonock Bridge Fire Marshal Michael Richards said. Thirteen people were either left homeless or told they could not return to nearby homes Monday.

The Learjet was approaching the airport when it slammed into the homes in the Poquonock River Bridge section of Groton.

"People were running down the street, and all I could see was blazing fire and smoke and people running up and down the street," said Pauleatha Glover, 55. "It was an explosion, you know, I thought somebody had blown up the Poquonock River Bridge."

Richards said the plane clipped a vacant home before cutting through two others and setting them on fire. The plane broke apart



SOURCES: Associated Press; ESRI AP

and the pieces landed in the river, he said.

Ross Finlayson, 17, said he saw the plane hit the houses and a riverside walkway in the residential area.

"It did a cartwheel," Finlayson said. "It exploded. It clipped over the top of that house and went right through the next house."

Police did not immediately release the names of those on board.

Gloria Aldana leaped from her burning home when the plane hit her one-story house, her husband said. She was treated at

a local hospital.

"She got panicked and jumped out the window," Edwin Aldana said. "She's doing OK."

The Learjet went down about a half-mile from the runway at Groton-New London Airport, Federal Aviation Administration spokesman Jim Peters said. He said it had taken off from Farmingdale Republic Airport on New York's Long Island.

Catherine Young, the Groton airport manager, said the plane was on its second approach when it went down. The crash happened 20 minutes before the tower opened and airport officials were using recordings of air-to-ground communication to piece together what happened, she said.

"The pilots announced something about coming to the airport, but it was garbled," she said.

The FAA and state Department of Environmental Protection were on the scene.

The plane is registered to Jetpro LLC, corporation based at New Hyde Park, N.Y.

The plane was believed to be carrying about 1,200 gallons of jet fuel, said Ned Torres, who works for the Department of Environmental Protection's oil and chemical spill unit.

Impasse

Continued from page 1

special session or Dewhurst restores a Senate tradition of requiring two-thirds of senators to agree to take up a bill on the Senate floor. Under that tradition, the Democratic senators blocked redistricting in the last special session.

Dewhurst said he would not change his mind about the so-called "two-thirds rule," saying it is a tradition for the Senate not to have it in place when lawmakers tackle redistricting.

"I don't think our 11 colleagues are in a position to ask for anything," Dewhurst said. "They have broken the Texas Constitution. They need to come back. They were elected to do a job."

Democrats said that is not going to happen without movement from Perry or Dewhurst.

"If I were a betting man considering a wager on how long we'll continue, if we'll hold off, we'll fold, I'd place my chips on the Texas 11," said West, invoking the name the Senate Democrats have been calling themselves.

The Texas Senate met briefly Monday afternoon and then broke for the day because of a lack of quorum with the Democrats gone.

The Democrats, meanwhile, held their daily meeting, reading aloud letters of support from constituents as photographers took their pictures.

Austin folk singer Steven Brooks, who said he was touring in New Mexico, stopped by the hotel briefly and entertained the senators with a song he wrote called the "Killer Ds of Texas." An often-repeated line in the song goes: "The killer Ds of Texas put the sting on Tom DeLay."

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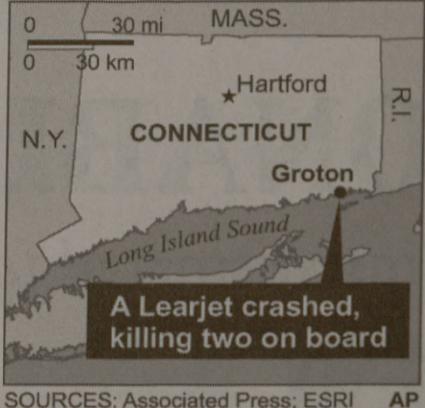
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