



ALL  
VICTIMS  
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RECOVERY OPERATION

# Collision between helicopter and plane kills 67 in nation's deadliest air disaster since 2001

BY THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

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Today's live updates have now ended. [Follow Friday's live updates](#) and find more reporting at [APNews.com](#)

A midair collision between [an Army helicopter and an American Airlines flight](#) from Kansas killed [all 67 people aboard](#) the two aircraft, officials said Thursday, as they [scrutinized the actions of the military pilot](#) after the country's [deadliest aviation disaster since 2001](#).

At least 28 bodies, including all three soldiers who were on the helicopter, have been pulled from the icy waters of the Potomac River as recovery operations continue.


## Here's what to know:

- **The cause of the collision is unclear:** The National Transportation Safety Board said it was too soon to speculate and pledged to [release a preliminary report within 30 days](#). Officials said [flight conditions were clear](#) and that the jet coming from Wichita, Kansas, was making a routine landing when the helicopter flew into its path.
- **Air traffic control communications:** Less than 30 seconds before the crash, [air traffic control made contact with](#) the helicopter, which said it had the aircraft "in sight." It appears air traffic control had no communication with the jet.
- **Identities of the victims are starting to emerge:** [Passengers on the flight](#) included [a group of figure skaters](#), their coaches and family members who were returning from a development camp that followed the U.S. Figure Skating Championships in Wichita.
- **Trump blames DEI:** President Donald Trump [blamed the crash on federal diversity initiatives](#) but provided no evidence for the claim and later acknowledged there was none. He later [signed an executive order](#) to stop "woke policies" in federal aviation.

RECOVERY OPERATION

## Cockpit voice and flight data recorders have been recovered from the plane

BY [MIKE BALSAMO](#)


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"NTSB investigators recovered the cockpit voice recorder and flight data recorder from the Bombardier CRJ700 airplane involved in yesterday's midair collision at DCA," National Transportation Safety Board spokesperson Peter Knudson said. "The recorders are at the NTSB labs for evaluation."

VICTIMS

## 2 Chinese nationals were among the victims

BY [DIDI TANG](#)


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The Chinese embassy in the U.S. said two Chinese nationals were among the victims of the crash and would provide consular protection and assistance. It also has asked the U.S. side to verify the information, officially inform the Chinese side and provide assistance to the families of the victims.

"The Chinese Embassy extends deepest condolences to all the victims and sympathies to the bereaved families," an embassy statement said. It did not offer further details on the victims.

# Aviation experts have long worried DC's congested airspace could lead to catastrophe

BY [RYAN J. FOLEY](#), [JIM MUSTIAN](#), [MICHAEL BIESECKER](#)

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Police and coast guard boats are seen around a wreckage site in the Potomac River from Ronald Reagan Washington National Airport, Thursday, Jan. 30, 2025, in Arlington, Va. (AP Photo/Jose Luis Magana)

Even in peak flying conditions, experts said, the airspace around Reagan Airport can challenge the most experienced pilots, who must navigate hundreds of other commercial planes, military aircraft and restricted areas around sensitive sites.


"This was a disaster waiting to happen," said Ross Aimer, a retired United Airlines captain and chief executive officer of Aero Consulting Experts. "Those of us who have been around a long time have been yelling into a vacuum that something like this would happen because our systems are stretched to extremes."

► [Read more about D.C.'s complex airspace](#)

## INVESTIGATION

## A different regional jet had to maneuver around a military helicopter at Reagan Airport just over 24 hours prior to collision

BY [ZEKE MILLER](#)

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Just over 24 hours before Wednesday's fatal midair collision, a different regional jet executed a go-around maneuver when descending to land at Reagan Airport due to a military helicopter in the same area.

Flight tracking sites and air traffic control logs show the Embraer E-175 was cleared to land at the airport's Runway


19 and advised about a helicopter in its vicinity. It executed a go-around after its automated collision avoidance system ordered what is known as a 'resolution advisory' to avoid nearby traffic, which put the aircraft out of proper alignment for landing. It landed safely minutes later.

The military helicopter, callsign PAT1, was advised of the descending airplane. Flight tracking sites show the plane flew roughly 1,000 feet (300 meters) above the helicopter, a normally acceptable separation.

Airline pilots are trained to respond immediately to resolution advisories, which are designed to avoid a potential mishap, but occasionally sound alarms for traffic that does not pose an immediate threat to safety.

## **WATCH: Trump signs an aviation order rolling back federal diversity initiatives**


BY THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

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President Donald Trump signed a presidential memorandum on aviation safety which he says will undo "damage" done to federal agencies by the Biden administration. He also doubled down on assertions that "incompetence" might have played a role in the crash.

## **Other deadly commercial airline crashes in the US**

BY ASSOCIATED PRESS

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In this Feb. 12, 2009, file photo, the wreckage of Continental flight 3407 lies amid smoke at the scene after crashing into a suburban Buffalo home and erupting into flames. (AP Photo/Dave Sherman, File)


Fatal crashes of commercial aircraft in the U.S. have become a rarity. The deadliest recent crash was in 2009 near Buffalo, New York. All 45 passengers and the four crew members were killed when the Bombardier DHC-8 propeller plane crashed into a house. One person on the ground also was killed.

The collision Wednesday of the Bombardier CRJ-701 twin-engine plane and UH-60 Blackhawk occurred over the Potomac River and the aircraft fell into the water. In 1982 an Air Florida flight crashed into the Potomac and killed 78.

► *Read more about the [deadliest commercial plane crashes in the U.S.](#)*

## **WATCH: Backlash came swiftly after Trump blamed DC plane crash on DEI**

BY THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

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As the nation reeled from the deadliest American aviation disaster in more than two decades, President Donald Trump on Thursday baselessly blamed diversity initiatives for undermining air safety. (AP Video: Mike Resoli)

**INVESTIGATION**

## Pilots union says its accident investigation team is working with the NTSB

BY GARY FIELDS

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Jason Ambrosi, president of the Air Line Pilots Association said the union's accident investigation team was on the scene working with the National Transportation Safety Board, and its Critical Incident Response Program was working to support union members and the families involved in the collision.

"We mourn the loss of our friends, colleagues, and members of our ALPA and Association of Flight Attendants union family," he said.

Ambrosi reiterated in a statement what the NTSB has said — the investigation must have the time to do its work.

"A lot of details and speculation will come out in response to this tragedy, but we must remember to let the investigation run its course," he said.

**INVESTIGATION**

## Air traffic control staffing was normal, AP source says

BY [ZEKE MILLER](#)Share 

One air traffic controller was responsible for coordinating helicopter traffic and arriving and departing planes when the collision happened, according to a report by the Federal Aviation Administration obtained by The Associated Press.


The configuration was "not normal," the report said, but a person familiar with the matter said the staffing at the air traffic control tower on Wednesday night was at a normal level. The positions are regularly combined when controllers need to step away from the console for breaks, are in the process of a shift change, or air traffic is slow, the person said, speaking on the condition of anonymity to discuss internal procedures.

**VICTIMS**

## WATCH: Former skaters, including Olympian Nancy Kerrigan, mourning plane crash victims




BY THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

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Former skaters, including Olympian Nancy Kerrigan, mourning plane crash victims

## Congressional Asian Pacific American Caucus criticizes Trump's comments blaming DEI

BY [DIDI TANG](#)

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
The leadership of the Congressional Asian Pacific American Caucus has also criticized President Trump for his attempts to blame DEI policies for the collision, calling it "despicable."

"President Trump has made baseless claims that seek to blame people of color for this horrific tragedy. It is despicable," read the statement from the congressional caucus. "We don't need racist lies, we need answers, and a leader who will put aside partisan politics to unite our country. President Trump has failed to meet this moment. The American people deserve better."

INVESTIGATION

## FAA has long struggled with air traffic controller shortages

BY THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

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The Federal Aviation Administration has long struggled with a shortage of air traffic controllers and identified fatigue as a factor that might lead to mistakes.

After a number of highly publicized close calls between planes that were following orders from control towers, the FAA said last summer that it would increase the minimum time controllers get between shifts starting this year.


An agreement between the agency and the National Air Traffic Controllers Association called for 10 hours off between shifts, 12 hours off before and after a midnight shift, and a limit on consecutive overtime assignments.

Although then-FAA Administrator Mike Whitaker said in September that the agency had met its 2024 goal of hiring 1,800 controllers, airline executives said they expected the problem to persist.

The cause of Wednesday night's crash is under investigation. A preliminary FAA report obtained by The Associated Press said one air traffic controller was working two positions at the time.

## **WATCH: 'That could've been us' says traveler whose flight was diverted soon after fatal air crash**

BY THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

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A traveler whose airplane was rerouted to a different airport shortly after the fatal aircraft collision near Washington D.C. is reflecting on the life-and-death situation he and other passengers almost faced. (AP Video: Nathan Ellgren)


A traveler whose airplane was rerouted to a different airport shortly after the fatal aircraft collision near Washington, D.C., is digesting the life-and-death situation he and other passengers almost faced.

Charlie Nash spoke to the Associated Press at Reagan National Airport after getting a free taxi from a small airport in Charlottesville, Virginia, where his flight was diverted, saying, "That could have been us if it had been a matter of seconds, minutes at most. That could have been us."

INVESTIGATION

## **Experts stress that midair collisions are incredibly rare**

BY [WYATTE GRANTHAM-PHILIPS](#)

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"Your drive to the airport is riskier than your flight from the airport," said Michael McCormick, an assistant professor and program coordinator for air traffic management at Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University in Daytona Beach, Florida. "Aviation remains, in spite of what happened yesterday night, the safest mode of transportation in the United States."

Hassan Shahidi, president and CEO of Flight Safety Foundation, also stressed how rare this kind of deadly accident is.





FILE - An American Airlines Boeing 777 is framed by utility wires as it prepares to land at Miami International Airport, Wednesday, Jan. 27, 2021, in Miami. (AP Photo/Milfred Lo, File)


"This should have never happened. It is absolutely preventable," Shahidi said, adding that he and others will continue to follow the NTSB's investigation into the exact cause of the collision to help ensure that it never happens again.

Part of that might come down to modernization and additional resources, he said.

"We have highly trained air traffic controllers all over the country. We have highly trained pilots all over the country. They're doing their jobs well," he said. "But we also need to understand what else is needed — in terms of technology, in terms of modernization of the air traffic control system, in terms of additional personnel and training support."

## Black lawmakers blast Trump's comments blaming DEI for the collision

BY [FARNOUSHAMIRI](#)

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A group of Black lawmakers issued a statement mourning the lives of those killed in the D.C. plane collision and blasting Trump's comments that diversity, equity and inclusion efforts were at fault.

"It is our hope that the outpour of condolences and support from people across our nation will bring solace during this season of bereavement," said Rep. Yvette Clark, chair of the Congressional Black Caucus. "However, the opportunity to fully focus our sympathies on those who are in mourning and who may not have even retrieved their

dearly departed was marred by a truly disgusting and disgraceful display of racist political prognostication."



President Donald Trump speaks in the James Brady Press Briefing Room at the White House, Thursday, Jan. 30, 2025, in Washington. (AP Photo/Alex Brandon)

The group added that diversity efforts "are American values" that "work to benefit all Americans who have been traditionally kept out of opportunities.

► [Read more about Trump's DEI comments](#)

INVESTIGATION

## LISTEN: Air traffic control audio as plane crashes at Reagan Airport

BY THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

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Less than 30 seconds before the crash, an air traffic controller asks the helicopter if it has the arriving plane in sight: "PAT-25, do you have the CRJ in sight?" The controller makes another radio call to PAT25 moments later: "PAT-25 pass behind the CRJ."

INVESTIGATION

## The Army has seen an increase in major aviation accidents in recent years

BY KEVIN VINEYS, [TARA COPP](#)

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The Army saw 15 flight and two ground Class A incidents in fiscal year 2024, according to safety data obtained by The Associated Press through the Freedom of Information Act and a January 2025 Army aviation safety report.

Class A incidents are any aviation accident that results in the destruction of the aircraft, deaths of service members or more than \$2.5 million in damage to the airframe.

In a briefing with Pentagon reporters Thursday, Army aviation Chief of Staff Jonathan Koziol said the spike in incidents last year had prompted the Army to do a safety stand-down, in which units pause flight operations to

evaluate safety procedures "to not allow these types of incidents to happen," Koziol said.

## Trump signs an aviation order rolling back federal diversity initiatives

BY [WILL WEISSERT](#)

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President Donald Trump signs a document in the Oval Office at the White House, Thursday, Jan. 30, 2025, in Washington. (AP Photo/Evan Vucci)

He says the presidential memorandum on aviation safety will undo "damage" done to related federal agencies by the Biden administration.


The president singled out policies meant to promote diversity and inclusion by the Biden White House and of the administrations of other Democrats, saying, "What they've done is disgraceful."

Signing the memorandum in the Oval Office, Trump repeated — without evidence — his past assertions that federal diversity programs contributed to a helicopter and a regional jet colliding near Washington, D.C.

He said the memorandum can help ensure that "we have very strong people running" key aviation agencies.

## President of air traffic controllers union says they 'cannot comment on the specifics' of the crash

BY [MELISSA GOLDIN](#)

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Nick Daniels, president of the National Air Traffic Controllers Association, wrote in a statement that "it would be premature to speculate on the root cause of this accident."

"We will wait for the National Transportation Safety Board to complete its work and use that information to help guide decisions and changes to enhance and improve aviation safety," he continued.

Daniels also offered condolences for those affected by "the tragic loss of life."

## Wichita, Kansas, touts itself as the 'Air Capitol of the World'

BY HEATHER HOLLINGSWORTH


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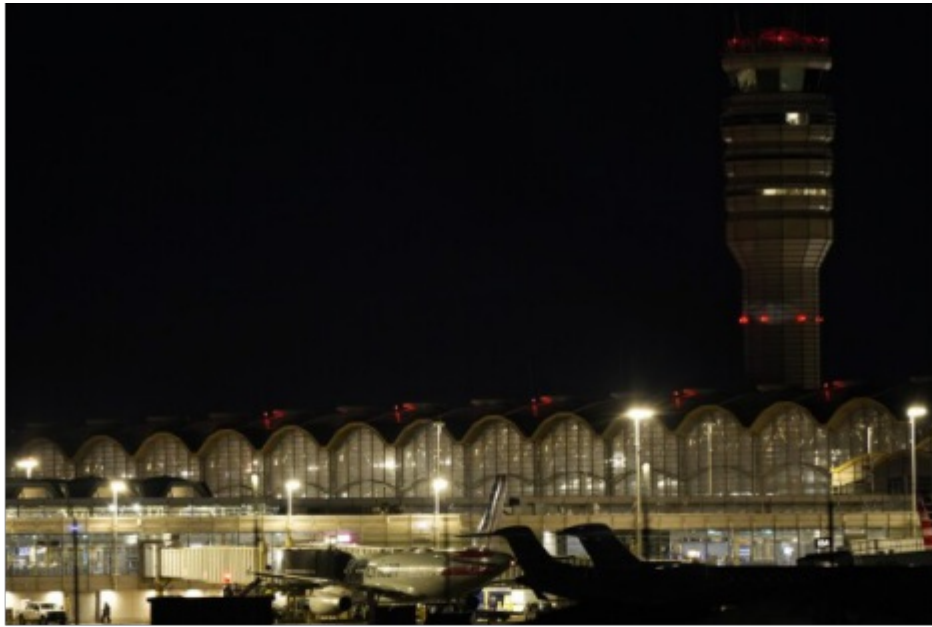
The city has major manufactures, like Spirit AeroSystems, along with a network of more than 350 suppliers in the region and 450 statewide, according to an economic development agency in the city called the Greater Wichita Partnership.

INVESTIGATION

## Staffing was 'not normal' in the air traffic control tower at Washington's Reagan National Airport

BY [ADRIANA GOMEZ LICON](#)

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An American Airlines plane is parked at a gate at Ronald Reagan Washington National Airport, Wednesday, Jan. 29, 2025, in Arlington, Va. (AP Photo/Mark Schiefelbein)

That's according to a report by the Federal Aviation Administration that was obtained by The Associated Press.

The report says one air traffic controller was working two positions at the time of the crash.

"The position configuration was not normal for the time of day and volume of traffic," the report says.

#### INVESTIGATION

## JUST IN: Staffing was 'not normal' in air traffic control tower at time of midair collision, FAA report obtained by AP says


BY THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

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#### INVESTIGATION

## Sen. Jerry Moran of Kansas pledges investigation into deadly plane crash

BY SUMMER BALLENTINE

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Moran said he's appreciated the "thoroughness" of the National Transportation Safety Board in the past and is looking to the agency for answers about what caused the deadliest American aviation disaster in more than two decades.

"The facts matter," Moran said. "NTSB will be the original provider of facts."





FILE - U.S. Sen. Jerry Moran, R-Kan., speaks during a Senate Appropriations subcommittee hearing May 3, 2022, on Capitol Hill in Washington. (AP Photo/Mariam Zuhair, File)

He pledged further investigation by Senate panels on transportation and aviation once more is known about the crash as a flight from Wichita, Kansas, was landing at Washington Reagan National Airport.

"We need to make certain, as I said earlier, that every American is safe to fly (and) they know they're safe to fly," Moran said.

## Sen. Roger Marshall praised Trump for 'radical transparency' in speculating on diversity initiatives

BY SUMMER BALLENTINE

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"That's what you'd expect from President Trump," Marshall, who represents Kansas, said. "On the other hand, we just had a phone call with the National Transportation Safety Board and FAA, and all they would say is we'll get back to you. And I'm telling Kansans, this is unacceptable."

Officials haven't yet established the causes of the Washington, D.C., collision, and Trump himself has acknowledged it's too soon to draw conclusions.

Asked whether he agrees with Trump's speculation that diversity contributed to the crash, Marshall said he has "no




idea."

"Certainly, I want air traffic controllers, just like my pilots, to be there because of their merit, not because of anything else," Marshall said. "And so I certainly agree with President Trump."

INVESTIGATION

## Inman said there's no indication any shoots or ramps were deployed from the plane

BY LEA SKENE

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"It was a very quick, rapid impact," he said.

INVESTIGATION

RECOVERY OPERATION

## Federal accident investigators haven't yet recovered the flight data recorders for the crafts

BY [LINDSAY WHITEHURST](#)

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That isn't unusual for crashes underwater, National Transportation Safety Board Chairwoman Jennifer Homendy said.

"We know they're there. They are underwater," she said. "We have many times recovered flight data recorders in water."

INVESTIGATION

## NTSB Chairwoman Homendy says investigators needed more time to come to any conclusions

BY LEA SKENE


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"We do have a lot of information but we need some time to verify it," she said.

VICTIMS

INVESTIGATION

## Inman says the board will brief the families of crash victims later Thursday

BY LEA SKENE, [LINDSAY WHITEHURST](#)Share 

Some are still arriving in Washington, he said.

"Now, we will not be determining the probable cause of the accident while we are here on scene. Nor will we speculate about what may have caused this accident," Inman said.




National Transportation Safety Board member Todd Inman speaks during a press conference at Ronald Reagan Washington National Airport Thursday, Jan. 30, 2025, in Arlington, Va. (AP Photo/Stephanie Searbrough)

INVESTIGATION

## NTSB board member Todd Inman says a preliminary report will be released within 30 days

BY LEA SKENE

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"Our mission is to understand not just what happened but why it happened, and to recommend changes to prevent it from happening again," Inman said at a Thursday afternoon news conference.

INVESTIGATION

## NTSB Chairwoman Jennifer Homendy: 'We are all here because this is an all-hands-on-deck event'

BY [MIKE BALSAMO](#), LEA SKENEShare 

"We're here to assure the American people that we are going to leave no stone unturned in this investigation," she

said at a news conference Thursday afternoon at Reagan National Airport.

She also said there were nearly 50 people on scene from the NTSB.



National Transportation Safety Board Chair Jennifer Homendy, center, speaks during a press conference at Ronald Reagan Washington National Airport Thursday, Jan. 20, 2025, in Arlington, Va. (AP Photo/Stephanie Scahrough)

#### INVESTIGATION

## Sen. Ted Cruz says it's 'a mistake' to speculate on what went wrong before the facts are clear

BY LISA MASCARO

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Cruz, a Texas Republican, said he was briefed by the NTSB chairman and senior FAA leaders and said there are still questions about why the helicopter was traveling at a certain altitude and if the helicopter pilot was looking at the wrong plane.


"We have a very serious investigation that proceeds and that is driven by the facts and evidence," he said. "I think it is a mistake to speculate until we see what the evidence demonstrates."

#### VICTIMS

## Kansas Sen. Roger Marshall says he and other officials will meet with

## families of the victims

BY [FARNOUSHAMIRI](#)

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When asked by reporters what he thought about President Trump blaming the collision on diversity measures, Marshall deflected, saying his focus was on the families of the victims, who he planned to meet with Thursday night.


He said officials briefed him and other lawmakers that the military helicopter did not have a transponder that was working to communicate with air traffic control or the commercial jet.

"Why would we be letting military helicopters or police helicopters in this very busy airspace without that transponder working properly?" Marshall said.

VICTIMS

## Clergy in Wichita, Kansas, gathered to call for compassion and healing

BY MARGERY A. BECK

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The Thursday vigil held in the Wichita City Council chambers saw leaders from many faiths offer prayers and messages of hope for those killed in the crash and their survivors.

"We will get through this, but the only way we will get through this is together," said the Rev. Dr. Pamela, who leads the St. Paul AME Church in Wichita.

VICTIMS

## 'Christine and Spencer were doing something that they both truly loved'

BY HOLLY RAMER

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In Barrington, Rhode Island, Ken Block is serving as a spokesperson for the family of Christine Lane and her 16-year-old son, Spencer.

"Christine and Spencer were doing something that they both truly loved, which was the skating, which Spencer had

pretty much devoted his life to," he said.



This recent handout photograph provided by The Skating Club of Boston shows club skater Spencer Lane, who died in an airplane collision with a helicopter on Jan. 29, 2025 in Washington. (The Skating Club of Boston photograph via


"Mr. Lane is very interested in communicating a lot more about the lives of Christine and Spencer but right now he's consumed with getting himself to DC, so we're asking for just a little bit of space so that he can put his head around the last 16 hours."

Earlier Thursday, Douglas Lane told WPRI-TV he and his wife adopted their two sons from South Korea. He described Spencer, the elder son, as a "force of nature" who was loved by everyone.

#### VICTIMS

## Former Olympic skater Nancy Kerrigan, once a Skating Club of Boston member, came to the facility

BY [MICHAEL CASEY](#)

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She was joined by another Olympic skater Tenley Albright and others.

"We just wanted to be here and be part of our community," Kerrigan said, her voice breaking several times as she talked to reporters.

"It's just such a tragic event and we've been through tragedies before as Americans, as people, and we are strong, and I guess it's how we respond to it," she said. "So, my response was to be with the people I care about and love. I needed support so that's why I'm here. I don't know. A little bit at a time."





1 of 3 | Former Olympic skater Nancy Kerrigan pauses while addressing the media at The Skating Club of Boston, where six members of the club's community, including athletes, coaches and family, were killed in an airplane collision with a helicopter on Wednesday in Washington.

INVESTIGATION

## The crowded airspace around the airport was well known before the crash, aviation attorney says

BY HEATHER HOLLINGSWORTH

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Search and rescue efforts are seen around a wreckage site in the Potomac River from Ronald Reagan Washington National Airport early Thursday morning, Jan. 30, 2025, in Arlington, Va. (AP Photo/Carolyn Kaster)

[Robert Clifford](#) is an aviation attorney involved in numerous airline disaster cases, including the Lion Air and Ethiopian Airlines crashes. He said the Department of Transportation, the Defense Department and the FAA should call for an immediate, temporary halt to all military helicopters in the airspace used by commercial airlines going into Reagan.

"I can't get over how stunningly clear it is that this was a preventable crash and this should never, ever have occurred," Clifford said.

"There have been discussions for some time about the congestion associated with that and the potential for disaster. And we saw it come home last night," Clifford said.

#### INVESTIGATION

## Sen. Tammy Duckworth says it's time for investigators to do their job but not speculate

BY [DIDI TANG](#)

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The Democratic senator, who's flown Army helicopters, criticized President Trump, who she said was "clueless" for already assigning blame.

"It is pretty sad that the commander-in-chief, at a time when family members of those military aircrew members just lost their loves one ... to immediately start blaming and questioning the competence of the crew members in that aircraft."

Duckworth, also ranking member of a Senate subcommittee on aviation safety, said she had calls with the FAA and NTSB.

**INVESTIGATION**


## The helicopter's instructor pilot, who was serving as pilot-in-command, had about 1,000 flight hours

BY [TARA COPP](#)Share 

That's according to Jonathan Koziol, chief of staff for Army aviation. The instructor pilot was evaluating the second pilot — who was also qualified as a pilot in command — for that night training flight and the pilot who was being evaluated had about 500 flight hours, Koziol said.

**VICTIMS****INVESTIGATION**

## Crew flying the Army Black Hawk helicopter was 'very experienced'

BY [TARA COPP](#)Share 

And they were not new to the unit or the congested flying that occurs daily around Washington, D.C., said Jonathan Koziol, chief of staff for Army aviation.

"Both pilots had flown this specific route before, at night. This wasn't something new to either one of them," Koziol said. "Even the crew chief in the back has been in the unit for a very long time, very familiar with the area, very familiar with the routing structure."

The maximum altitude where the Black Hawk was at the time of the crash — along a published corridor called Route 4 — was 200 feet above ground, Koziol said. Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth said at the White House on Thursday that elevation seemed to be a factor in the crash.

Koziol said investigators need to analyze the flight data before making any conclusions as to altitude.

VICTIMS

## Plane crashes in sports have devastated pro teams and college programs

BY JIM VERTUNO

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In this Nov. 15, 1970, file photo, a fireman looks over the wreckage of a plane in Kenova near Huntington, W.Va., that killed all 75 aboard including members of the Marshall football team. (AP Photo/Benny Griffin, File)

The crash of an [American Airlines jet](#) that collided with an Army helicopter was the latest to strike the sports world in the U.S. and globally.

Among the passengers were [several members of the Skating Club of Boston](#) who were returning from the [U.S. Figure Skating Championships](#) in Wichita, Kansas. They included teenage figure skaters Jinna Han and Spencer Lane, their mothers and two highly regarded Russian-born figure skating coaches, [Evgenia Shishkova and Vadim Naumov](#). All 64 people on board were feared dead.

Air travel accidents in sports are rare, but they have had devastating impacts on national programs, amateur teams and professional clubs.

► [Read more about plane crashes and sports teams](#)

VICTIMS

RECOVERY OPERATION

## The bodies of all three soldiers who were on the helicopter have been recovered, officials say

BY LOLITA C. BALDOR

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Officials said the remains will be at Air Force Mortuary Affairs Operations at Dover Air Force Base in Delaware. That office coordinates the dignified transfer of fallen service members.

The officials spoke on condition of anonymity to discuss details not yet announced. No identities of the crew have

been released.

## **WATCH: Trump offers condolences then dives into politics with attack on diversity initiatives**


BY THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

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President Donald Trump is suggesting that the Federal Aviation Administration's diversity efforts has made air travel less safe. The president asserted his opinion in a news conference, even though the crash has yet to be fully investigated.

## **Who is Sean Duffy, the new transportation secretary responding to the DC plane crash?**

BY [JILL COLVIN](#)

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Transportation Secretary Sean Duffy speaks in the James Brady Press Briefing Room at the White House, Thursday, Jan. 30, 2025, in Washington. (AP Photo/Alex Brandon)

Sean Duffy, [the new transportation secretary](#), is facing his first major crisis just hours after his swearing-in.

Duffy, who was [confirmed by the Senate on Tuesday](#), quickly emerged as a public face of the federal government's response to the deadly plane crash at Reagan National Airport, the closest airport to Washington, D.C. An Army helicopter collided with an [American Airlines jet](#) carrying 60 passengers and four crew members Wednesday night while the plane was landing, sending it careening into the frigid Potomac River. All onboard are feared dead in what's shaping up to be the deadliest [U.S. air crash](#) in decades.

"Our new Secretary of Transportation, Sean Duffy — his second day on the job when that happened. That's a rough one," Trump said as they appeared together during a White House briefing Thursday.

► [Read more about Transportation Secretary Sean Duffy](#)

VICTIMS

## Multiple former students at Loudoun County Public Schools in Virginia are among the victims

BY CHRISTINE FERNANDO

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It was announced by the school district's superintendent.

Mental health professionals will be available at schools, Superintendent Aaron Spence said in a letter to families and staff.

"This unimaginable loss has deeply affected our community, and with great sorrow, we have learned that multiple victims were former LCPS students," Spence said.

VICTIMS

## Pope Francis sent a personal telegram of condolences to Trump expressing his 'deepest sympathies'

BY NICOLE WINFIELD

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Usually, papal telegrams of condolence are signed by the Vatican secretary of state. But Thursday's note was signed by the pope himself and said Francis expressed his spiritual closeness to all those affected.




"I offer my deepest sympathies to the families who are now mourning the loss of a loved one. I likewise pray for those involved in the recovery efforts," read the telegram.

#### INVESTIGATION

## Army Black Hawk appeared to be flying about 100 feet above max altitude allowed for its flight path

BY [TARA COPP](#)

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And the American Airlines jet also appeared to be too high initially for where they were on their final approach to the runway, based on an analysis of published route maps and radar data.


The published maximum FAA altitude for Route 4 at that point in the route — near Woodrow Wilson Bridge on the Potomac River — is 200 feet above ground level.

A radar track posted online late Wednesday showed the helicopter at 300 feet above ground level at the time of the collision. However, the radar data posted online hasn't been independently verified. In his remarks at the White House, Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth also said an "elevation issue" seemed to play a role in the crash.

#### VICTIMS

## World champion Russian skaters on American Airlines jet built a new life as coaches in the US

BY THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

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Evgenia Shishkova and Vadim Naumov of Russia perform during free skating in the pairs event of the NHK Trophy International Figure Skating Competition at Nagoya, central Japan, Dec. 9, 1995. (AP Photo/Shizuo Kamayoshi, File)

The two [Russian figure skating coaches killed](#) in the [American Airlines crash](#) were two-time Olympians and former world champions in the pairs event.

They were also a married couple with a son who finished fourth last week at the U.S. national championships in Wichita, Kansas. Their son was not on the [same flight](#).


Evgenia Shishkova and Vadim Naumov won a world championship title together in pairs skating in 1994 and narrowly missed out on Olympic medals that year at the Lillehammer Games before moving to the U.S. and coaching generations of young skaters in New England.

After their son Maxim Naumov skated at the national championships, the 52-year-old Shishkova and her 55-year-old husband stayed in Wichita for a development camp for some of the most promising young skaters in the country.

► Read more about [the skating coaches](#)

## Sen. Chris Van Hollen of Maryland says Trump should apologize for his news conference remarks

BY LISA MASCARO

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
"It was just grotesque the way he immediately politicized this terrible tragedy," said the senator, who's a Democrat.

Van Hollen noted the way Trump started "pointing fingers" without knowing the facts of the situation.

"He owes the American people an apology," he said.

## Former Transportation Secretary Pete Buttigieg calls Trump's criticisms 'despicable'

BY [WILL WEISSERT](#)

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"As families grieve, Trump should be leading, not lying," Buttigieg posted on X shortly after the president's White House news conference.

He noted that when he led the agency, it "had zero commercial airline crash fatalities out of millions of flights on our watch."

That followed Trump sharply criticizing Buttigieg and even resorting to profanity to denounce what he called Democratic-led efforts to promote diversity at federal agencies.

Trump said Buttigieg at the transportation department, had "run it right into the ground with his diversity."

## The passenger plane in the collision was a Bombardier CRJ700

BY HEATHER HOLLINGSWORTH

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Employees and officials gather around the new Bombardier CRJ700 during roll out ceremonies Friday, May 28, 1999 in Montreal. (Paul Chiasson/The Canadian Press via AP)

Bombardier is now headquartered in Wichita, Kansas, and the plane was certified in the city, said Jim Howell, a commissioner for Sedgwick County, which includes Wichita.

He spent two decades working in flight testing, including a stint with Bombardier in the early 1990s.

"There's a lot of connections to this plane. There's a lot of connections to Bombardier as a company. We have a lot of employees who work for Bombardier who are still involved in testing and maintaining those types of planes here in Wichita," Howell said.

➤ [Read more about the aircraft involved in the collision](#)

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