

# Rescue efforts intensify with scores missing

Authorities work under threat of aftershocks and unfavorable weather

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Over 72 hours after a powerful earthquake hit the Sea of Japan coast on New Year's Day, killing at least 84 people in Ishikawa Prefecture and injuring hundreds, authorities are intensifying their efforts to rescue those trapped under collapsed buildings.

Amid the threat of aftershocks and unfavorable weather conditions — with heavy rains and low temperatures aggravating an already dire situation — the window for rescue efforts is closing quickly. Survival rates drop significantly after the first 72 hours.

In Wajima, the area hit hardest by the quake, dozens of people are still reported to be buried under collapsed buildings.

As of 8 a.m. on Thursday, level 1 or higher

earthquakes on the Japanese intensity scale have been detected in the area 592 times. According to the Meteorological Agency, rain and snow are expected between Saturday and Monday in the area. This might lead to landslides where the ground is loose as a result of the continuing quakes.

Ishikawa Prefecture has released a list of 79 missing people as of 2 p.m. on Thursday, which include residents of Wajima, Suzu and Anamizu. They are continuing to update the list as more people are confirmed missing.

Prime Minister Fumio Kishida told reporters Thursday morning that, in the past four days, 156 people had been rescued, and that, as of 9 a.m., the police had received 138 requests for help. Eighty cases had already been addressed by that hour and the remaining 58 will be tackled appropriately, he added.

"I strongly feel that the national and local governments, as well as business operators and citizens, must unite to confront this national crisis," Kishida said, calling the earthquake "the biggest natural disaster of the Reiwa era."

One person is reported to be missing from

the port of Suzu after a tsunami hit the area on Monday.

Over 320 people have been injured in Ishikawa alone, reports say, with a total of over 60 such cases in the neighboring prefectures of Toyama and Niigata as well.

Authorities are still assessing the full extent of the damage to buildings and homes in the area, especially in the cities where the impact of the quake was most severe. But as of Wednesday afternoon, over 200 houses in Ishikawa were confirmed to be entirely or partially demolished.

In neighboring prefectures, 420 homes in Niigata and 57 in Toyama have been confirmed to be damaged as well.

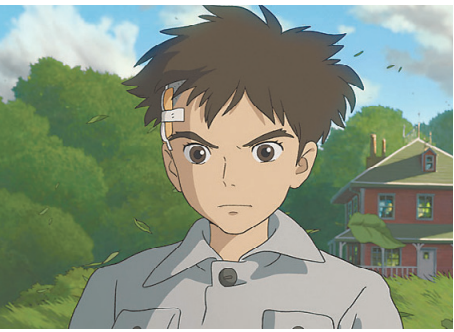
As of 1 p.m. Thursday, 34,554 people had evacuated their homes to seek shelter in 407 evacuation centers located across the three prefectures of Ishikawa, Toyama and Niigata, disaster prevention minister Yoshifumi Matsu-mura told reporters Thursday.

Around 33,000 people have evacuated their homes and are seeking shelter in 355 evacuation centers in Ishikawa.

Thousands of houses across the area are



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A man carries out a mattress and other belongings from his collapsed house in Suzu, Ishikawa Prefecture, on Thursday. KYODO

still experiencing power and water shortages, as Self-Defense Forces personnel continue to distribute water in tankers.

Authorities have managed to increase the supply of aid to affected areas amid a gradual recovery in road conditions. The government is continuing to ramp up efforts to further clear the road to Wajima and Suzu in order to deliver more supplies.

Delivering supplies via the sea is also in the

works at six ports across Ishikawa, with water distribution by the coast guard in Nanano port having started on Wednesday afternoon. A large vessel stocked with supplies and water is en route to the Noto area from Kyushu, and is expected to arrive by Friday afternoon.

Rescue operations have been hampered by the geographical remoteness of the municipalities which bore the brunt of the disaster — all located on the Noto Peninsula in east-

ern Ishikawa — as access by land is limited and capsized ships have impeded the establishment of a sea route.

In a news conference Thursday afternoon, **Continued on page 2 →**

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Haneda collision: A timeline			
Time	Speaker	Transcript	Background
Jan. 2, 5:43:02 p.m.	Japan Airlines Flight 516	Tokyo tower JAL516 spot 18.	The Japan Airlines flight is told to continue its approach to runway 34R at Haneda Airport, which is also known as runway C.
	Control tower	JAL516 Tokyo tower good evening, runway 34R continue approach, wind 320/7, we have departure	
5:43:12 p.m.	Flight 516	JAL516 continue approach 34R	The JAL flight gets final approval to land, and its pilot confirms the order.
5:44:56 p.m.	Control tower	JAL516 runway 34R cleared to land, wind 310/8	
5:45:01 p.m.	Flight 516	Cleared to land runway 34R JAL516	The coast guard aircraft receives an order to move to a holding position short of the runway, and its pilot confirms the order.
5:45:11 p.m.	JA722A (coast guard aircraft)	Tower JA722A C.	
	Control tower	JA722A Tokyo tower good evening, No. 1. Taxi to holding point C5.	At 5:47 p.m., the planes collide.
5:45:19 p.m.	JA722A	Taxi to holding point C5, JA722A. No. 1. Thank you.	

JAPAN TIMES GRAPHIC

## Details emerge about moments before Haneda collision

KATHLEEN BENOZA  
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Details of what unfolded in the moments before Tuesday's deadly collision between a Japan Airlines plane and a coast guard aircraft have begun to emerge, but as a formal probe gets underway, many questions remain.

Communications between the Haneda Airport control tower and the JAL jet, as well as those between the tower and the coast guard plane, paint a partial picture of the final minutes before the collision, which killed five of the six coast guard personnel on board, with the captain escaping with serious injuries.

The transcript of those communications, released by the transport ministry, shows that JAL Flight 516 had clearance to land on runway 34R (also known as Runway

C), while the coast guard aircraft had been ordered to move to a holding position short of that runway. The coast guard craft acknowledges this order — but within a matter of minutes, both jets were burning after the runway collision, necessitating a "miracle" evacuation from the JAL plane carrying 379 passengers and crew.

On Wednesday, JAL said their crew members told the company there were no abnormalities detected during their flight and that they proceeded with landing based on clearance from the air traffic control tower. Tadayuki Tsutsumi, the airline's managing executive officer, told reporters that they believe they conducted operations as usual and said that ongoing investigations will determine whether the airline was at fault in any way.

It was previously reported that the captain of the coast guard plane said he

had clearance to enter the runway, but this conflicts with the transport ministry transcript.

The crash shouldn't have happened, because communications between the control tower and the planes appeared to be following set protocols, said Hiroyuki Kobayashi, a former JAL pilot and an aviation analyst. But despite the communications showing no signs of anything abnormal, the coast guard plane entered the runway without clearance.

"I'm not sure how the coast guard plane could've misunderstood (their orders)," Kobayashi said. "Having two aircraft on the runway poses a risk of collision. ... It is crucial to have only one on the runway at all times."

He explained there was a high chance the fuel tank for the coast guard craft was hit and damaged, which led to a fuel leak-

age that set the jets ablaze.

Kobayashi added that when planes do enter a runway without clearance, it often forces an arriving plane to do a go-around, in which a plane aborts its attempted landing and regains altitude.


In Tuesday's incident, however, it was dark and the JAL pilots did not see the smaller coast guard plane, an airline spokesperson told the AFP news agency. But one of the jet's pilots spotted "an object" just before the collision, the spokesperson said.

"If the traffic controllers had noticed, they would've sent out some order," **Continued on page 2 →**

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A human connection

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## What would Trump redux mean for Asia?

Return to White House could see ex-leader's destructive impulses unleashed on region

Focus

JESSE JOHNSON  
STAFF WRITER

The potential return of Donald Trump to the White House has raised eyebrows in Asia, with some experts and former officials suggesting that a victory in the 2024 U.S. presidential election could see Trump's more destructive impulses unleashed on the region.

If American voters in November again choose Trump, who is the heavy favorite to win the Republican nomination, the decision will have potentially serious implications for Japan, which lost its most effective "Trump whisperer" with the assassination of former Prime Minister Shinzo Abe in 2022.

"A return to the White House by Donald



Trump would have adverse and destabilizing effects on the Indo-Pacific region and on U.S. interests there," said Daniel Russel, who was the assistant secretary of state for East Asia under President Barack Obama.

While incumbent Democratic President Joe Biden has prioritized shoring up alliances and forging new partnerships in the region, Trump has a long history of disparaging allies, including Japan, and taking a trans-

**A return to office for former U.S. President Donald Trump could destabilize the Indo-Pacific region, some observers say.**  
MAX WHITTAKER / THE NEW YORK TIMES.

actional approach to dealing with them.

What's more, a second-term Trump would have a better grasp of the executive branch's bureaucratic machinery than he did in 2017, his first year in office. The guardrails that partially thwarted his more authoritarian tendencies in his first term — Congress, the civil and foreign service, his own staffers — have also steadily eroded, Daniel Drezner, a professor of international politics at The Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy at Tufts University in Massachusetts, wrote recently.

The former president's allies are even beginning to pre-screen the ideologies of thousands of potential foot soldiers, part of an unprecedented move to centralize and expand his power at every level of the U.S. government if he wins in 2024, Axios reported last month.

Under such a scenario, observers say it would be unlikely that the government's national security and economic agencies would be able to function normally or resist problematic or illegal White House orders as they did during Trump's first term.

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