U.S. Figure Skaters Presumed Deceased in Deadly Passenger Plane and Military Helicopter Crash

According to a source cited by CNN, "American Airlines Flight 5342, which was en route from Wichita, Kansas, is in pieces in the water and the helicopter is in the water nearby." This was after a midair collision that has sent shockwaves through the country and skating communities across the world.

What Happened

On January 29, at roughly 9 pm, a Sikorsky H-60 helicopter, while approaching Runway 33 at Reagan National Airport (DCA), collided midair with a PSA Airlines Bombardier CRJ700 regional jet carrying at least 64 people. 60 of them were passengers, while the remaining 4 were crew members. The search remains for passengers on the plane that crashed with the army helicopter. A search and rescue operation commenced immediately in search of survivors or otherwise. A determination of how many people died in the American Airlines plane crash with the helicopter is still being made.

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A further investigation into who was aboard the plane revealed that some of the passengers were part of the U.S. figure skating community, the US Figure Skating organization said in a statement. The organization also confirmed that "several" of its members were aboard the flight.

The group of US Figure Skating members included "athletes, coaches, and family members... returning home from the National Development Camp held in conjunction with the U.S. Figure Skating Championships in Wichita, Kansas," the organization told CNN in a written statement. They went on to write, "We are devastated by this unspeakable tragedy and hold the victims' families closely in our hearts. We will continue to monitor the situation and will release more information as it becomes available." Furthermore, some of those who were aboard the flight are world-renowned champion figure skaters.

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The passengers included Evgenia Shishkova, 53, and Vadim Naumov, 56, celebrated former world champion figure skaters, who won the World Figure Skating Championship in pairs in 1994. The loving couple was returning from DC to Wichita after attending a skating championship on Flight 5342. Their 23-year-old son Maxim Naumov, who's also a talented skater for Team USA, was not with his parents at the time.

Currently, the search rescue is underway, with at least thirty bodies being recovered from the Potomac River.

The Takeaway

60 passengers and 4 crew members were aboard a passenger flight that collided midair with the Black Hawk helicopter. The cause of the crash is still being investigated. From early reports, it seems the military has many unanswered questions. The National Transportation Safety Board is leading the investigation.

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