

Beat: News

TRANSASIA AIRWAYS PLANE CRASHES IN TAIWAN

AT LEAST 23 KILLED

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USPA NEWS - A passenger plane crashed into a river in Taiwan's capital, Taipei, shortly after takeoff on Wednesday morning, killing at least 23 people, officials said. Rescue operations were underway to pull survivors from the water.

The plane, a TransAsia Airways twin turboprop flying as Flight 235, had just left Taipei Songshan Airport bound for nearby Kinmen, an island just off the mainland Chinese province of Fujian, Taiwan's Civil Aeronautics Administration said. Fifty-three passengers and five crew members were aboard, the agency said.

In addition to those killed, 15 others were injured and the remainder were unaccounted for, the agency said Wednesday evening. Dramatic images taken from car dashboard cameras and posted online showed the plane flying low over an elevated highway, its left wing clipping the road before it crashed into the river. The plane struck a taxi, injuring two people inside, the Taipei government said.

Local television showed the plane's white and purple fuselage resting in the Keelung River in eastern Taipei, as rescuers in inflatable boats searched for survivors.

Rescuers were having difficulty reaching the submerged parts of the plane, a city government statement quoted Hsu Ching-sheng, a deputy fire chief, as saying. Because the plane traveled some distance after striking the road, emergency responders had to expand their search area to account for the possibility that people were thrown from the plane, Mr. Hsu added.

One survivor, Lin Ming-wei, found his one-year-old son in the water three minutes after the crash, and immediately began performing cardiopulmonary resuscitation, the Liberty Times newspaper reported.

"I absolutely can't lose my son," Mr. Lin said, according to his brother, Lin Ming-yi. The boy is now in intensive care and his condition is stable, the newspaper reported.

By 9 p.m., two cranes had lifted the fuselage onto the riverbank, and rescuers and investigators were combing through the plane's interior.

The crash was the second for TransAsia in just over six months, following a crash in July that killed 48 people, and it seemed likely to raise further questions about the airline's safety. The cause of the July crash is still under investigation; that plane, an ATR-72, was attempting to land at Magong, in Taiwan's Penghu Islands, as Typhoon Matmo brought heavy rain and strong winds to the region.

The pilot, 42, had 4,914 hours of flying time, including 3,400 on ATR-72 model planes, while the co-pilot, 45, had 6,922 hours of flight time, including 6,500 on ATR-72s, the Civil Aeronautics Administration said.

TransAsia flies chiefly to Taiwan and mainland China, as well as destinations in Japan, Thailand, South Korea and Cambodia. The Taipei-Kinmen route, which takes just over an hour, is flown daily by TransAsia and is popular among the increasing number of Chinese tourists visiting Taiwan, as well as business travelers from Taiwan flying to the mainland.

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