



WORST CRASH IN AVIATION HISTORY—A newsman looks at a high pile of wreckage and the engine of the Air Force Globemaster plane which crashed near Tachikawa Airbase, 25 miles west of Tokyo, killing all 129 persons aboard. It was the worst disaster in aviation history.

Air Tragedy Probe Slated

TOKYO, Friday, June 18 (AP)—The world's worst air disaster killed every one of 129 U. S. servicemen aboard a giant Globemaster in a fiery crash near Tokyo Thursday.

The great, two-decked C124, its engines falling after a take-off for Korea, was trying desperately to get back to Tachikawa airbase, 25 miles west of Tokyo. It never made it.

The Globemaster went into a flat spin, staggered, and plummeted nose down into a muddy farm.

Japanese farmers said there was a terrific flash and a roar as the 3,000 gallons of gasoline aboard burst into flames. Then the dead and dying were incinerated in a towering funeral pyre.

"The smell of burned oil and human flesh was terrible," AP Correspondent Stan Carter reported from the scene. "The bodies were terribly burned and mangled."

BURNED METAL

The fire was so hot it ignited magnesium metal in the plane's framework and part of it burned like a thermite bomb.

"The rain kept coming down, hissing on the hot steel that was tangled up in giant balls of wreckage."

"The salvage crews were working in leg-deep mud. It was like something from the Korean battlefield—medics carrying the bodies away in litters and the ambulances filing slowly down the road."

Hours later, by searchlight, Air Force crews worked to recover the charred bodies. One victim was found still clasping a rosary. Apparently he had been praying when his fate overtook him.

The Air Force said it would hold an immediate investigation to try to discover the cause of the crash. The long list of victims will not be released until their next of kin are notified.

Of the total aboard, seven were crew members and the rest were airmen and Army Engineers attached to air bases in Korea. The men were returning from rest leave in Japan.

JUST IN SERVICE

All Far East C124 four-engined giants, capable of carrying 222 passengers, had just gone back into service after being grounded over the week end with generator trouble. In recent days, flights had been cancelled several times because of mechanical trouble.

The Air Force said, however, there was nothing to indicate coming trouble on the fatal flight. The weather, while rainy and murky, was well within safe flying limits.

"I heard a tremendous sound of engines," said 35-year-old farmer Hiroji Kato, who was burned by hot metal thrown from the wreck.

"I looked up. The huge plane was falling on me. I almost fainted. Then it crashed and exploded."

Other Japanese witnesses said the plane came in so steep it almost somersaulted, and that bodies were thrown around the wreckage.

Japanese firemen dragged out seven dying before flames drove them back.

Carter said the wreck scene looked like "a hell," and that sickened medics and air police were toiling to assemble the mangled and burned remains of the victims.

WORST IN HISTORY

The crash was far and away the worst in the history of aviation. The previous record was the

crash of another C124 last Dec. 20 at Moses Lake, Wash., when 27 died. There had been some survivors at Moses Lake.

Far East Air Forces said the giant craft rolled down the two-mile runway at Tachikawa and was airborne at 4:31 p.m.

There was a thousand-foot ceiling with broken clouds, a mile visibility, and light rain and some fog. Safety limits for Air Force flights are a 250-foot ceiling and a half-mile visibility.

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EAST BERLIN COMMANDER T. Dibrova (left, wearing military rolls past demonstrators on way divided capital. Orders by Dibrova day after Red forces broke up rule. Martial law was imposed.