

Beat: Miscellaneous

Civilian cargo plane crashes at military base in Afghanistan

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USPA News - A large civilian cargo plane crashed Monday afternoon at a U.S. military base in northeastern Afghanistan, witnesses and the NATO-led International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) said. It was not immediately clear if there were any casualties.

The accident happened at around 3:30 p.m. local time when the aircraft was attempting to take off from Bagram Air Field, which is a large U.S. military base that is located in Parwan province. A photo from the scene showed thick plumes of black smoke billowing from the crash site. "We can confirm that a civilian cargo aircraft crashed very shortly after takeoff at Bagram Airfield. Emergency responders are currently on the scene assessing the situation," said Master Sgt. Bryan Gatewood, an ISAF spokesman. He could not say to which airline the aircraft belonged, how many people were on board or if there were any casualties. Omar Sharif Ghyasy, who works for an international humanitarian organization, witnessed the accident and described the plane as white with a blue color on its tail. "The back seemed very low while the nose very high," he said. "Then it turned to its left, then right, and while completely on its right, it almost vertically went down." Taliban spokesman Abdulqahar Balkhi claimed its fighters shot down the aircraft, but the insurgent group is known to frequently claim credit for accidents in which it had no involvement. "There is no reporting to suggest there was insurgent activity in the area when the aircraft crashed," Gatewood said. Monday's crash comes just two days after a small fixed-wing plane, an MC-12 aircraft, crashed in the Shah Joy district of Zabul province, killing four American service members. There were no immediate claims of responsibility, and the U.S. military said initial reporting indicates there was no enemy activity in the area at the time of the crash. And on March 11, five American soldiers were killed when a coalition helicopter crashed during a rain storm in southern Kandahar province. It followed the crash of a Black Hawk helicopter in Kandahar province in August 2012, killing seven American service members and four Afghans.

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