

16 Marine Corps Service Members Killed in Military Plane Crash

Sixteen service members were killed after a U.S. military transport plane crashed in rural northern Mississippi on Monday evening, the U.S Marine Corps said on Tuesday.

The KC-130 Hercules aircraft disappeared from air traffic control radar after taking off from MarineCorps Air Station Cherry Point in North Carolina, the Marine Corps said in a statement.

It plunged into a field at approximately 4 p.m. CDT (5 p.m. EST) on Monday in Mississippi's LeFlore County, about 100 miles (160 km) north of Jackson, the state capital.

The crash left a five-mile (8-km) trail of debris, the local Clarion-Ledger newspaper reported.

Mississippi Governor Phil Bryant said in a statement that it was a tragedy and called for prayers for all those involved.

U.S. President Donald Trump said on Twitter that the crash was heartbreaking. "Melania and I send our deepest condolences to all!" he wrote.

The cause of the crash was being investigated, the Marine Corps' statement added. The names of the dead were being withheld until family members were notified.

Images posted online by local media showed the crumpled wreckage of a plane engulfed in flames in a field surrounded by tall vegetation, with a large plume of smoke in the sky above.

Local authorities urged people who are not emergency

responders to avoid the area because of fuel on the ground.

The KC-130 Hercules is used for air-to-air refueling, to carry cargo and perform tactical passenger missions. It is operated by three crew members and can carry 92 ground troops or 64 paratroopers, according to a U.S. Navy website.

The Greenwood Fire Department chief, Marcus Banks, told the Greenwood Commonwealth newspaper in LeFlore County that 4,000 gallons of foam were used to extinguish the wreckage. Firefighters were at one point driven back, he added, by several “high-intensity explosions” that may have been caused by ammunition igniting. {eo}

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