

US promises to assist Taiwan ‘in any way’ possible

Written by Taipei Times

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Buddhist nuns yesterday pray for the victims of Wednesday's TransAsia Airways plane crash at Taipei's Second Funeral Parlor.

Photo: David Chang, EPA

The US will help in any way it can with the investigation into the crash of TransAsia Flight GE235, a Washington official said on Wednesday.

US Assistant Secretary of State for East Asian Affairs Daniel Russel told a media briefing that he did not know if Taipei had actually made a request for assistance.

“Of course, we stand ready to help in any way,” he said.

“Issues relating to the health, safety and welfare of the people of Taiwan are important to us,” Russel said.

Russel, who travels extensively throughout Asia, said that he was monitoring the situation closely.

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"I offer my condolences to the families that lost loved ones on board the TransAsia flight," he said.

Russel said that the US and Taiwan had discussed matters of air safety in the past.

The accident has stirred memories of similar crashes in Washington and New York.

In 1982, Air Florida Flight 90 — a Boeing 737-200 — ploughed into the 14th Street Bridge over the Potomac River in Washington, shortly after take-off from the then-National Airport.

Freezing temperatures and ice slowed the flight on take-off and once airborne, it could not reach sufficient speed and altitude to fly.

After hitting the bridge, the plane plummeted into the river. Of the 74 passengers and five crew members on board, only four passengers and one flight attendant survived. Four motorists on the bridge were also killed.

The US National Transportation Safety Board determined that pilot error was responsible for the crash.

In 2009, US Airways Flight 1549 — an Airbus A320-200 — hit a flock of geese on take-off from New York City's LaGuardia Airport.

The plane lost power and the pilot — Chesley "Sully" Sullenberger, a former US Air Force F-4 pilot — ditched it in the Hudson River off midtown Manhattan.

There was no loss of life as small boats rescued passengers and crew from the floating aircraft.

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In Taipei, American Institute in Taiwan Director Christopher Marut yesterday offered “profound condolences and heartfelt sympathy to the passengers and families affected by the tragic loss of those on board Flight GE235 on Feb. 4 in Taipei.”

The Canadian Trade Office in Taipei extended “its deepest condolences to the families of the victims of the plane crash in Taipei” in a statement posted on its Web site yesterday.

Pope Francis on Wednesday conveyed his condolences to the families of those who died, saying he was saddened by the news.

The pope wishes to offer “his heartfelt condolences to the civil authorities and to assure the families of the deceased and the missing of his spiritual closeness,” Vatican Secretary of State Cardinal Pietro Parolin wrote in the message on behalf of the pope, that was addressed to Archbishop of Taipei Hung Shan-chuan (洪山欽).

Messages of condolence have also come from the French Office in Taipei, the British Trade and Cultural Office, the European Economic and Trade Office in Taiwan, Japan’s Interchange Association and the Australian Office Taipei.

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