

Weather unlikely to have caused crash

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Messages are pasted on a display bearing a photograph of late chief of the general staff general Shen Yi-ming at the Taipei Guest House yesterday.

Photo: Chien Jung-fong, Taipei Times

A UH-60M Black Hawk helicopter that crashed on Thursday, killing eight military officers including the chief of the general staff, is unlikely to have gone down due to mechanical failure or weather, a Taiwan Transportation Safety Board official said yesterday.

Based on a preliminary investigation of the helicopter's two flight data recorders, mechanical failure could be 80 percent ruled out as the cause, while weather, including elements such as turbulence and wind shear, could be 80 to 90 percent excluded, the official said.

However, the flight recorders contain a memory card that can only be decoded by the aircraft's US-based manufacturer, they said.

The card is to be sent to Sikorsky Aircraft Corp, as it contains important data about the helicopter's mechanical systems and its operational handling, the bureau said.

Mechanical failure could be completely ruled only after the information is retrieved from the recorder, the official said, adding that the possibility of human error was also being considered.

The helicopter, carrying military personnel to Dongaoling Base (東岡陵) in Yilan County, went down in the mountains of New Taipei City's Wulai District (烏來) on Thursday with 13 people on board. Eight, including Chief of the General Staff General Shen Yi-ming (申宜明), died in the

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crash.

Military investigators extracted the flight recorders at about 10:40am the following day.

The Air Force Command Headquarters yesterday said it has received the recorders from the bureau and would hand them over to an investigation task force.

Citing the Air Force Flight and Ground Safety Regulations (空軍飛行及地面安全條例), the headquarters said that the task force must compare the recorder data with weather patterns, flight path data, the helicopter's flight plan, record transcripts and maintenance records before preparing a final report.

The headquarters also called on the media to avoid reporting unverified information, as the analysis and investigation would take some time.

Meanwhile, members of the public poured into the Taipei Guest House to pay their respects to the dead officers.

In addition to Shen, the deceased officers were Political Warfare Bureau Deputy Director Major General Yu Chin-wen (俞欽文), Major General Hung Hung-chun (洪洪春) of the Office of the Deputy Chief of the General Staff for Intelligence, Major Huang Sheng-hang (黃勝航) of the Office of the Chief of the General Staff, Chief Master Sergeant Han Cheng-hung (韓成興), pilot Lieutenant Colonel Yeh Chien-yi (葉建益), copilot Captain Liu Chen-fu (劉陳富) and crew chief Master Sergeant Hsu Hung-pin (許洪彬).

Dressed in uniform, a member of the armed forces expressed grief over the loss of Shen, saying that he had been his commanding officer when he served at the Ministry of National Defense and had always cared for him.

Political Warfare Bureau staff officer Lieutenant Colonel Lee Chun-feng (李俊峰) said that he had

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just been promoted by Yu and reported to the bureau on the day of the accident.

“I never thought I would never have a chance to report to Yu directly,” he said.

An animation created by members of the brigade in which Yu had originally served to wish him a happy Lunar New Year later this month had no use now, he added.

On a bulletin board dedicated to Hsu were two unsigned notes that said: “Dad, let’s play with your cellphone next time,” and “I love you, dad.”

Other notes left by Hsu’s colleagues and friends said: “The mission is over. Good work,” and “Thank you for what you have done for the nation.”

His father, weeping, said that Yeh, who was his first son, had on Wednesday called his mother “to wish her a happy birthday, yet the following day he was gone.”

Liu’s friends and relatives also mourned him, saying that he was raised by a single parent and had gotten married just last year.

President Tsai Ing-wen (蔡英文) visited the guest house after inspecting the Dongaoling radar station, where Shen had been scheduled to visit, to boost the morale of military personnel stationed there.

Tsai posted on the board dedicated to the deceased officers sticky notes written by military personnel stationed at the station who asked the president to post them on their behalf.

A formal public service is to be held on Jan. 14 at the Songshan Air Force Base in Taipei, the ministry said.

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Separately yesterday, a ceremony was held at Wei-Shui's Hill (霧山水) in Yilan County, followed by a rite to comfort the spirits of the deceased, which was attended by more than 1,000 people.

Additional reporting by Peng Wan-hsin

Source: [Taipei Times - 2020/01/05](#)