

# THIRTEEN FEARED DEAD IN PLANE CRASH

## Thirteen feared dead in plane crash

Thirteen people are feared dead after a passenger plane crashed into the sea off the coast of Taiwan.

Rescue workers searched through the night in the Taiwan Strait for survivors but found only wreckage and human remains. The remains were beyond recognition and DNA tests will be necessary to positively identify the dead, according to those at the scene.



Formosa Airlines flight B-12255 vanished from radar screens minutes after take-off from Hsinchu, south of Taipei.

The Saab 340 aircraft was bound for Taiwan's second city of Kao Hsiung in the south. No foreigners are believed to have been on board. According to some reports, the plane disappeared about six miles (4km) off the coast. The air route between Hsinchu and Kao Hsiung was only introduced on Monday. Taiwan state television said that military radar had located the wreckage of the plane. According to Tsai Tui, head of the Civil Aeronautics Administration, winds were light and visibility fine when the plane took off. But radar information showed the plane appeared to have headed northwest instead of south, according to officials. The CAA has ordered Formosa to ground six other SAAB 340 airliners for comprehensive safety checks

A makeshift mortuary was set up in the fishing port of Nanliao near the crash site as relatives arrived. Buddhist monks chanted and relatives and local inhabitants burned incense and threw paper money into the sea, in the belief it would ease the dead. Lin Chien-chiang, a city councillor from Hsinchu, told state-run television that two bodies had been found by fishermen but the report has not been confirmed.

Lin said fishermen in the area heard an explosion. Formosa Airlines President Sun Hung-hsiang told the press the chances of finding survivors were slim. Taiwan's Premier, Vincent Siew, expressed shock at the news.

The transportation and communications ministry have formed a task force to handle the airline's second accident in seven months. According to experts, Formosa Airlines has the worst flight safety record of local airlines with six major air disasters over the last 10 years.

### **Latest incident**

The disappearance of the plane follows a series of air crashes in Taiwan.

A China Airlines airbus crashed at Chiang Kai-shek International Airport killing 202 people on February 16.

The cause of that crash, Taiwan's worst ever aviation disaster, has not been announced.

Three people have also died in military plane crashes this year.

A Formosa Airlines Dornier also crashed while attempting to land on the offshore island of Matsu last August, killing all 16 on board.

That followed the crash of another Formosa Airlines Dornier into the sea off Matsu in April 1996, killing five passengers