Beat: Local

Cargo plane crashes into houses in Congo-Brazzaville, killing 32

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USPA News - At least 32 people were killed Friday when a cargo plane crashed into a residential area while attempting to land at an airport in Brazzaville, the capital city of the Republic of the Congo, rescue workers said on late Saturday. The accident happened at around 5:30 p.m. local time on Friday when the Ilyushin Il-76 aircraft went down in a residential area of Mselou district in Brazzaville, several kilometers (miles) from Maya-Maya Airport. The aircraft was carrying six crew members, five of them Armenian citizens, and a police officer.

The aircraft was initially believed to belong to Trans Air Congo, but local authorities later said the cargo plane belonged to regional airliner Aéro-Service. "The company informs that Trans Air Congo does not own and has never used the Il-76 which crashed on 30 November 2012," Trans Air Congo said in a statement on Saturday. A Congolese Red Cross official said 32 bodies had been recovered as of late Saturday, including the remains of the seven people on board the aircraft. The other victims were killed when the large cargo plane struck around a dozen houses and a bar before falling down a ravine and catching fire. In addition to those killed, at least fourteen people were taken to area hospitals, but their conditions were not immediately known. "As of now we have 32 bodies, but our rescue operations are still underway to see if there are other victims," the Red Cross official said, speaking on the condition of anonymity. The cause of Friday`s accident was not immediately known, but authorities believe it may have been caused by a severe thunderstorm which hit the area at the time of the crash. Some media reports said the pilot of the aircraft was in the process of aborting the landing when the plane hit the ground. In March 2011, nearly two dozen people were killed when a Soviet Union-built Antonov An-12 cargo plane crashed into a densely populated area of Pointe-Noire, the second-largest city in the Republic of the Congo. Among those killed were four Trans Air Congo crew members and nineteen people on the ground.

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