



RESCUE WORKERS at the crash site at Muan International Airport on Dec. 29.

Korea plane crash probe to focus on bird strike, landing gear failure

INVESTIGATORS probing the cause of the worst civil aviation accident ever in South Korea will focus on a bird strike and the unusual landing-gear failure in the final moments of the fateful flight that left all but two of the 181 occupants of the Boeing Co. 737 jet dead.

The 737-800 aircraft operated by Jeju Air Co. crashed at Muan International Airport on Sunday morning, skidding along the runway on its belly before smashing into a wall, where it exploded into a ball of fire. Only a pair of flight attendants survived.

While the aircraft was almost entirely destroyed, investigators will have valuable data to work with as they reconstruct the event. One vital key will be a read-out of the two flight recorders, which were already pulled from the wreckage, though one device is damaged and may need longer to analyze.

Then there's footage showing the aircraft during approach with one engine apparently flaming out, alongside videos of the plane coming into the airport and sliding along the runway at high speed, appearing largely intact, before the impact with the embankment.

In another incident on Monday, a Jeju Air plane returned safely to South Korea's Gimpo Airport after it was found to have a problem with the landing gear immediately after takeoff, Yonhap News reported. South Korean authorities will launch a special inspection into all of the 101 Boeing 737-800 planes operating in the country, while asking Boeing and the maker of the engine to join the investigation.

They will also probe other factors, such as whether the airliner's personnel followed safety manuals properly, the airport's measures to prevent bird strikes and if the plane's power system was shut down before the crash, transport ministry officials said at a briefing Monday.

They will also look into whether the so-called localizer, an instrument set to guide the landing of the plane, had any relevance to the crash.

Shares of Jeju Air declined as much as 16% to a record low in Seoul trading on Monday, while parent AK Holdings, Inc. fell 12%.

The accident poses several unusual mysteries, and investigators have said it's too soon to speculate what may have caused the crash. Mid-air bird strikes are rare but not entirely uncommon and seldom deadly because aircraft can operate on one engine for some time. Why the landing gear didn't deploy also remains unclear, or indeed if there's a link between that malfunction and the bird strike that was discussed between the cockpit and control tower just before the landing.

The pilot, considered an experienced captain with close to 7,000 hours of active duty, issued a mayday emergency call minutes after the control tower warned of a bird strike. He aborted his first landing, started a go-around and switched direction on the runway in his second attempt. The control tower granted clearance to land in the opposite direction, and officials said it's unlikely that the runway length caused the crash.

The pilot didn't seem to have sufficient time to try alternative measures such as dumping fuel, a transport ministry official said at Monday's briefing.

The Boeing 737 involved in the crash is a predecessor to the latest Max variant. It's considered a reliable workhorse that passed routine maintenance checks, in a country with deep expertise for aircraft servicing. Around the world, there are more than 4,000 planes of this type in service. —

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The World | SI/5

From peanut farmer to president: Jimmy Carter passes away at 100



BLOOMBERG

“shine brighter over time, few more than his unique determination to put human rights at the forefront of his foreign policy from the start of his presidency,” his chief domestic policy adviser, Stuart Eizenstat, wrote in a 2018 biography of his former boss.

STATE FUNERAL

In a statement on Sunday, President Joseph R. Biden eulogized Mr. Carter as “an extraordinary leader, statesman and humanitarian” who touched the lives of people around the world with “his compassion and moral clarity.” Biden said he'll be ordering a state funeral for Mr. Carter in Washington.

President-elect Donald J. Trump, who often brought up Mr. Carter's presidency during this year's election campaign to needle Mr. Biden, said Mr. Carter faced challenges at a pivotal time in US history. He “did everything in his power to improve the lives of all Americans,” Mr. Trump said on his Truth Social platform. “For that, we all owe him a debt of gratitude.”

The signature achievement of the Carter presidency, the Camp David Accords between Israel and Egypt, led to peaceful co-existence between the Middle East neighbors even as it fell short of resolving the conflict between Israel and the Palestinians.

That and other foreign policy breakthroughs, including a treaty granting Panama ownership of the US-built Panama Canal, were overshadowed by the plight of American hostages held in Iran during the last 444 days of his presidency. They were finally released the day Mr. Carter turned over the Oval Office to Republican Ronald Reagan.

On the domestic front, the Mr. Carter presidency was dogged by economic woes. Inflation reached

13.3% at the end of 1979 compared with 5.2% when he took office in January 1977. The Federal Reserve's actions to stem price increases pushed home-mortgage rates to almost 15%, and Mr. Carter had to take emergency action to stem a slide in the dollar. There were energy shortages, and oil prices more than doubled.

MALAISE SPEECH

A speech to the nation on July 15, 1979, became emblematic of Mr. Carter's presidency.

With fuel prices skyrocketing and lines at gas stations lengthening, Mr. Carter told Americans that solving the energy mess “can also help us to conquer the crisis of the spirit in our country.” He said many Americans “now tend to worship self-indulgence and consumption.”

Though Mr. Carter never uttered the word, the address became known as the “malaise” speech and contributed to a sense that Mr. Carter was powerless to change the nation's course.

“Our memory of the speech comes from those who reworked it, who twisted its words into a blunt instrument that helped them depose a president,” historian Kevin Mattson wrote.

Mr. Carter's words, he noted, “received immediate applause and yet wound up ensuring his defeat” to Mr. Reagan in the 1980 election.

Just weeks after delivering the speech, Mr. Carter tapped Paul Volcker, president of the Federal Reserve Bank of New York, to take over as chair of the Federal Reserve, replacing G. William Miller, who became Treasury secretary. Mr. Volcker made it clear to Mr. Carter that he would deal head-on with inflation by pursuing tighter monetary policies than Mr. Miller. Mr. Volcker's policies — which sent interest rates as high as 20%

— came at a high price, the fallout contributing to Mr. Reagan's landslide victory over Mr. Carter in the 1980 election.

Though some of Mr. Volcker's policies “were politically costly, they were the right thing to do,” Mr. Carter commented upon Mr. Volcker's death in 2019.

NOBEL PRIZE

Mr. Carter made some of his biggest imprints on the world in the years after he left the White House. He “reinvented the post-presidency,” observed Julian Zelizer, a professor of history at Princeton University and a Carter biographer.

In four-plus decades as an ex-president — the longest such tenure in American history — Mr. Carter waged a worldwide campaign against war, disease and the suppression of human rights through the Atlanta-based Carter Center, which he founded with his wife. The center made particular strides against Guinea worm disease, a parasite spread through contaminated water that can render victims non-functional for months. Worldwide cases dropped to just 14 in 2023 from an estimated 3.5 million in 1986, according to the center.

Mr. Carter was awarded the 2002 Nobel Peace Prize for “decades of untiring effort to find peaceful solutions to international conflicts, to advance democracy and human rights, and to promote economic and social development.”

His post-presidential causes were not without backlash. Fourteen advisers to the Carter Center resigned in protest of his best-selling 2007 book, *Palestine: Peace Not Apartheid*, which compared Israel to the White governments of South Africa that systematically oppressed Black citizens.

Mr. Carter's longevity defied the odds. He revealed in 2015 that he had melanoma, a type of cancer, and that it had spread to his brain. He received treatment, recovered and on March 22, 2019, became the longest-living chief executive in US history. In 2021, Jimmy and Rosalynn Mr. Carter celebrated their 75th wedding anniversary.

His Christian faith, he said, made him “absolutely and completely at ease with death.” —

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Budget, from SI/1

Ms. Pangandaman said the DPWH will now have a P1,007-trillion budget for 2025, lower than the P1,034-trillion funding approved by Congress.

Aside from the vetoed items, Mr. Marcos said there will be “conditional implementation” on certain items to make sure “the people's funds are utilized in accordance with their authorized and stated purposes.”

This includes the Ayuda sa Kapos Ang Kita Program (AKAP), which was originally implemented by the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) but will now be co-implemented with the Department of Labor and Employment (DoLE) and the National Economic and Development Authority (NEDA).

The implementation of AKAP, which provides one-time cash assistance of up to P5,000 for workers “will be strategic, leading to the long-term improvement of the lives of qualified beneficiaries, while guarding against misuse and duplication,” Mr. Marcos said.

Executive Secretary Lucas P. Bersamin told reporters that AKAP will have strict guidelines, but did not rule out the possibility of local politicians seeking funding for their constituents.

“Don't be naive. Don't be naive,” he said. “Always, in our life here in the Philippines, there must be somebody to initiate.”

He added that the National

Government is not fully knowledgeable of local situations. “It should come from lower levels.”

Public finance analyst Zyza Nadine M. Suzara said the direct veto on P168 billion worth of items under unprogrammed appropriations “does not significantly alter the structure of the 2025 national budget,” which means that “pork remains huge in the DPWH budget.”

“In the first place, projects under unprogrammed appropriations cannot be released unless there are certain conditions,” she said in an X message. “The President and the economic managers simply conceded to the decisions of the bicam.”

EDUCATION

Meanwhile, Ms. Pangandaman reiterated that unprogrammed appropriations can be used for DepEd's computerization program.

“As long as we have additional revenues from the DoF (Department of Finance), we can actually augment or increase the budget of DepEd, especially for its computerization program,” she said.

Members of the bicam had reduced DepEd's budget by P12 billion, including P10 billion for its computerization program.

Enrico P. Villanueva, who teaches money and banking at the University of the Philippines Los Baños, said bicam members inflated the DPWH budget by P288 billion, but the President reduced this “only by

P26.1 billion, which is not even 10% of the Congress-dictated increase.”

“For many Filipinos, that Congress-initiated increase is deemed as pork barrel, because it did not undergo the consultative budgeting process involved in making the National Expenditure Program,” he said in an X message. “People also view infra projects as a source of corruption and possible funding for the 2025 elections.”

“If the President wanted to address the concerns of the people, it should have vetoed the DPWH budget increase substantially if not totally.”

Ibon Foundation Executive Director Jose Enrique “Sonny” A. Africa said the President's last-minute effort to veto a few items was aimed at averting “an obvious Constitutional challenge where the entire education sector budget is lower than even just the DPWH's.”

“The tiny P26.1-billion cut in the DPWH budget was just enough to be able to claim that the education sector budget defined as DepEd, SUCs, CHED and TESDA combined is more than DPWH's P1,007 trillion,” he said in a Facebook Messenger chat.

Mr. Africa also noted the P1,055-trillion allocation for the education sector is less than the P1.13-trillion budget for infrastructure, which includes the P1,007 trillion for the DPWH's projects and P123.7 billion for the Department of Transportation's projects.



PHILIPPINE STAR/NOEL PABALATE

PHILIPPINE President Ferdinand R. Marcos, Jr. signed into law the P6.3-trillion national budget for 2025 in a ceremony in Malacañang, Dec. 30.

A reenacted budget should have been used for the first quarter of the year, he said, while constructing “a socially rational people-biased 2025 budget deliberated transparently.”

However, Mr. Marcos said in his speech that a reenacted budget would “delay vital programs and jeopardize targets for economic growth.”

The Marcos administration may have averted operating under a reenacted budget but it disregarded health and other forms of social protection “that can increase the contribution of labor to overall productivity,” Leonardo A. Lanzona, an economics professor at the Ateneo de Manila University, said via Messenger chat.

PHILHEALTH

Another analyst said the President

failed to address concerns on the removal of state subsidy for the Philippine Health Insurance Corp. (PhilHealth), the agency responsible for the implementation of universal healthcare.

“It's frustrating, it's heart-breaking, and very unheroic on the day of Rizal anniversary,” Health advocate and former Health department advisor Anthony C. Leachon said of the President's inaction on the defunding of PhilHealth.

Mr. Marcos vowed to expand PhilHealth members' benefits in his speech, a move that Mr. Leachon said was a mere “lip service.”

“Without the funds, how can you increase the benefits? You cannot increase the benefits by not giving the P74-billion subsidy,” he said in a phone interview.

Mr. Marcos earlier defended

the bicam's move to defund PhilHealth, citing its reserve funds.

PhilHealth's reserve funds, which are not surplus funds and are meant to decrease the amount of members' contributions as well as expand services for them, will be eroded in two to three years, Mr. Leachon said.

“And you're not supposed to spend that because they have a big mistake in saying that the reserve funds are surplus funds. These are contingency funds that should be used to expand the benefit package, reduce the premium, and reduce the out-of-pocket expenses,” he said.

Meanwhile, the President also subjected 11 other items to conditional implementation, such as DSWD's “Payaapang Pamayanang Program, the Rice Competitiveness Enhancement Fund and support for foreign-assisted programs.

The use of excess funds from the annual tariff revenue from rice imports will also be subjected to guidelines of the departments of Finance and Agriculture.

Four items in the 2025 budget were also put under general observation to “clarify changes made by Congress.” These items include the payment of additional compensation for the organizational structure of the Senate and the House of Representatives, as well as the two chambers' electoral tribunals and the Commission on Appointments.