

Beat: Local

Death toll rises to 2 in Navy helicopter crash off Virginia

-, 09.01.2014, 13:51 Time

USPA News - A second crew member died Wednesday after a large U.S. Navy helicopter crashed in the Atlantic Ocean off Virginia earlier in the day, military officials said on Thursday. Two other crew members were injured while a fifth remains unaccounted for.

"Two crew members are confirmed dead following the crash of a U.S. Navy MH-53E Sea Dragon helicopter in the Virginia Capes," the U.S. Navy said in a brief statement on late Wednesday evening after an injured crew member died of injuries. "Two additional crew members are in stable condition at Sentara Norfolk General Hospital. The search for the fifth crew member is continuing." The accident occurred at around 11 a.m. local time on Wednesday when the MH-53E Sea Dragon aircraft went down in the ocean about 18 nautical miles (33 kilometers) off Virginia Beach, a city just east of Norfolk in Virginia. Five crew members were on board the aircraft as it conducted routine training operations. A second Navy helicopter that was also in the area reported the crash to rescue workers and dropped a life raft to four people who were in the water, the U.S. Coast Guard said. The group was rescued at around 11:45 a.m. when two Navy helicopters hoisted them from the water and flew them to Sentara Norfolk General Hospital, where two of them later died. A search and rescue operation for a fifth crew member continued throughout the day with multiple vessels and aircraft involved, including two MH-60S helicopters from the Navy's Helicopter Sea Combat Support Squadron 28 (HSC-28). Coast Guard Cutter Shearwater and an MH-60 Jayhawk helicopter are expected to resume searching on Thursday, but finding the crew member alive appeared unlikely. The U.S. Navy said the downed helicopter was assigned to Helicopter Mine Countermeasures Squadron 14 (HM-14) at Naval Station Norfolk Chambers Field. The aircraft is one of the largest helicopters in the Western world and is known to be prone to accidents, with Sea Dragon crashes having killed more than 30 people since 1984. Wednesday's crash came less than 24 hours after a U.S. Air Force helicopter crashed in a nature reserve in a coastal area of eastern England. All four crew members on board were killed in the crash of the HH-60G Pave Hawk helicopter, which is a highly modified version of the better-known Black Hawk aircraft.

Article online:

<https://www.uspa24.com/bericht-1755/death-toll-rises-to-2-in-navy-helicopter-crash-off-virginia.html>

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Editorial program service of General News Agency:

United Press Association, Inc.
3651 Lindell Road, Suite D168
Las Vegas, NV 89103, USA
(702) 943.0321 Local
(702) 943.0233 Facsimile
info@unitedpressassociation.org
info@gna24.com
www.gna24.com