

Beat: Vips

Church leader among 9 dead in Bahamas plane crash

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USPA News - A prominent evangelical pastor was among nine people killed Sunday when a private aircraft crashed on the northernmost island of the Bahamas, making it the country's worst aviation disaster in more than three decades, authorities said. The accident happened just before 5 p.m. when a Learjet 35A aircraft registered to Diplomatic Aviation crashed at a shipping yard on Grand Bahama while on final approach to the island's international airport.

The private jet - which was carrying a total of nine people - was flying from Lynden Pindling International Airport on New Providence island. "Officers responded along with EMS personnel, Police Fire Services and personnel from the Grand Bahama Shipping Yard, where they met and came upon a crash site," police spokesperson Terecita Pinder said. "A pathologist from the Rand Memorial Hospital was also at the scene and confirmed that all passengers on the flight were confirmed deceased." Footage from the scene indicated that the aircraft struck a crane at the shipyard before crashing in a junkyard, but there were no reports of casualties on the ground. The Bahamas Faith Ministries confirmed its prominent founder and president, pastor Myles Munroe, was among those killed in the crash, as well as his wife, pastor Ruth Monroe. The group of passengers was on their way to the Global Leadership Forum in Freeport, which was being organized by Myles Munroe and is being held this week. "Words cannot express our profound sense of loss for all of the team members on this tragic flight," the Bahamas Faith Ministries said in a statement. "Dr. Munroe was our visionary, our founder, our mentor, advisor, father figure and friend. He was a global leader and icon and was respected worldwide." Other passengers were identified as Bahamas Faith Ministries Senior Vice-President Dr. Richard Pinder, Youth Pastors Lavard and Radel Parks, and their young son Johannan. The identity of the seventh passenger was not immediately released. The pilots were identified as Stanley Thurston and Frahkan Cooper. A team of investigators arrived at the scene on early Monday morning to investigate the cause of the accident. Andrew J. Young, a former United States Ambassador to the United Nations (UN), expressed his deep sadness over the deaths of his friends, Dr. Myles and Ruth Munroe. "Dr. Munroe was flying here to be with his flock. There are two to three hundred people scheduled to be here for this leadership conference, people from all over the world," Young said. "He had an impressive ministry. He gathered his followers to be here to talk about how they would continue without him." Sunday's crash marked the country's worst aviation disaster since September 1980, when a Florida Commuter Airlines passenger plane crashed in the Atlantic Ocean near the island of Grand Bahama, killing all 34 people on board. A more recent accident happened on the island of New Providence in October 2010, killing all eight people on board.

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