

The Boston Globe

Serving our community since 1872

FRIDAY, JANUARY 31, 2025

Now, the search for answers

67 dead, no survivors in worst US crash since 2001; staffing at air traffic control tower 'not normal'

By Campbell Robertson, Mitch Smith, and Thomas Fuller

NEW YORK TIMES

WASHINGTON — On a clear night at Reagan National Airport, an air traffic controller radioed a warning to a Black Hawk Army helicopter traveling south along the Potomac River.

"PAT25," the controller said, using the call sign for the Black Hawk, "Do you have the CRJ in sight?"

CRJ, shorthand for a type of passenger jet, was American Airlines Flight 5342. The plane was arriving after a 2½-hour journey from Wichita, Kan., and carrying 64 people, among them men returning from a duck hunting trip and more than a dozen figure skaters, including two former world champions from Russia.

The response from the Army helicopter came quickly: "The aircraft's in sight."

Air traffic control instructed the Black Hawk to "pass behind" the plane. But moments later gasps were heard coming from the control tower. "Oooh!" someone exclaimed, according to a



ANDREW HARNIK/GETTY IMAGES

Recovery crews pulled 27 bodies from the plane and one from the helicopter Thursday.

recording posted to LiveATC.net, a site that compiles control tower communication.

In the skies above Washington, just 3 miles from the White House, a fireball illuminated the night.

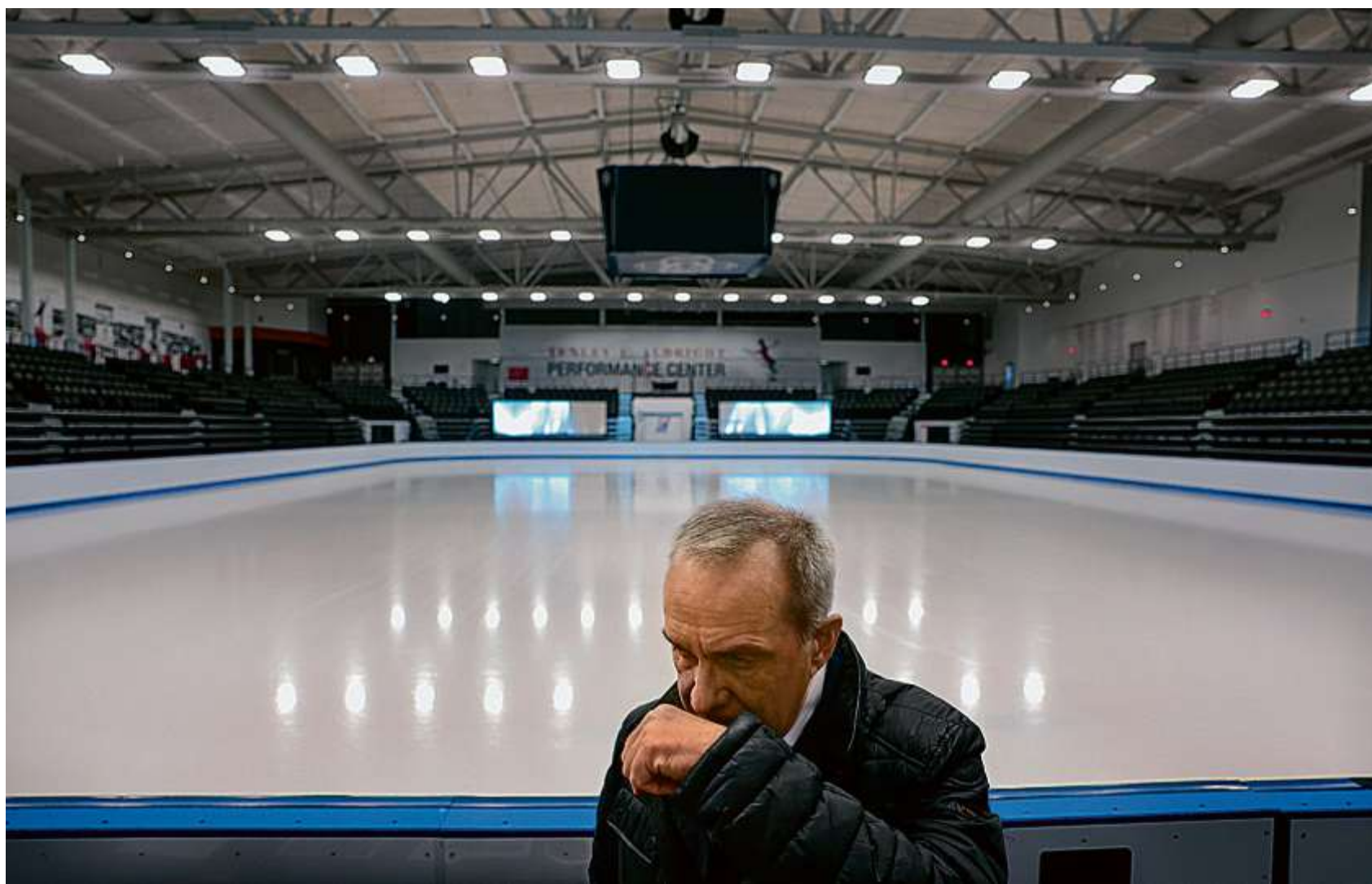
The collision of the Black Hawk and Flight 5342, which killed everyone on the jet and all three people in the helicopter, was the deadliest crash in the United States in more than 20

►Such a crash is highly unlikely at Logan, where skies are far less crowded. B5.

years. Why it occurred was still unknown on Thursday, but a preliminary Federal Aviation Administration report noted that the air traffic control tower, monitoring one of the country's most congested air corridors, was understaffed at the time.

Recovery crews on Thursday searched for bodies of victims in the icy waters of the Potomac. By midday, the crews had pulled 27 bodies

CRASH, Page A5



CRAIG F. WALKER/GLOBE STAFF

Doug Zeghibe, executive director of the Skating Club of Boston, paused after speaking with the media on Thursday in Norwood.

For renowned skating club, sad echoes of the past

By Kat Cornetta

GLOBE CORRESPONDENT

There are few figure skating clubs in the world with the facilities and influence of the Skating Club of Boston, but also few that have experienced such repeated tragedy.

The Norwood-based club, home of two skaters and two coaches killed in the collision Wednesday night between a passenger jet and a military helicopter near Reagan National Airport, has been the standard bearer for the sport in the United States for 114 years. A host of the 2016 world championships and eight US figure skating championships, the club has taken on a special importance in the past decade, proving to be among the last of its kind to survive the drastic decline in popularity of the sport in the United States.

CLUB, Page A7

'Just stunned': Skating community in mourning for six with local ties



Four of the plane crash victims, clockwise from top left: Jinna Han, Vadim Naumov, Evgenia Shishkova, and Spencer Lane.

By Shannon Larson, Christopher Gavin, Danny McDonald, and Niki Griswold

GLOBE STAFF

NORWOOD — Thursday found Patrick Blackwell emotionally shattered. He was coming to grips with the death of his best friend, Spencer Lane, a 16-year-old rising star in competitive figure skating, who was killed in the plane crash the night before that took the lives of five others connected to the Skating Club of Boston.

"It does break my heart not to be able to see him here at the rink again," Blackwell said Thursday.

Lane, 16, was "going to go big," Blackwell said. He had only started skating a few years ago, but the "determination he had for off-ice jumps and skating, it was incredible to me."

Like Blackwell, Doug Zeghibe, executive director of the club, struggled to define the grief that was gripping his organization, a historic epicenter of the competitive figure skating com-

VICTIMS, Page A7

Tragedy adds to tensions in D.C.

Brief reflection then resumption of wrangling

By Jim Puzzanghera, Tal Kopan, and Sam Brodey

GLOBE STAFF

WASHINGTON — It's been a long month in the nation's capital filled with drama, tension, confusion, and now, as January draws to a close, tragedy.

The events have come in quick succession: the nail-biter election of a House speaker; the somber anniversary of the Jan. 6, 2021, insurrection; the rare indoor inauguration of an incoming president; Donald Trump's rapid-fire flurry of executive actions, some halted temporarily by the courts; and contentious battles over some of his Cabinet picks.

Then, on Wednesday night, 67 people perished after a horrific midair collision between a regional passenger jet heading to Ronald Reagan Washington National Airport and a military helicopter over the frigid waters of the Potomac River.

But the work of governing still had to grind forward Thursday. So senators — many of whom fly in and out of that very airport twice a week — joined to offer prayers for the victims before the hearings for a trio of Trump's most controversial nominees.

"This is a horrible, hard-to-understand disaster that demands answers," Senator Chuck

WASHINGTON, Page A5

Hearings continue

President Trump's nominees Robert F. Kennedy Jr., Kash Patel, and Tulsi Gabbard made their cases. A2, A4.

Marianne Faithfull, who went from being a feather-voiced pop star to a homeless heroin addict, died at 78. She later reemerged as an acclaimed cabaret performer singing songs of dark honesty. C9.

Massachusetts' shelter system is on the verge of running out of funding, and Healey officials said today could be key. B1.

The FDA approved a nonopioid painkiller from Vertex Pharmaceuticals that the drugmaker says poses no addiction risk. B5.

Ibram X. Kendi, an antiracism scholar, is leaving Boston University after five years. His center will close in June. B1.

Dry January is nearly over, good news for liquor stores that have lost business. B5.



Wet blanket

Friday: Rain then snow. High 39-44. Low 28-33.

Saturday: Sunny, cool. High 30-35. Low 12-17.

High tide: 12:08 a.m., 12:19 p.m.

Sunrise: 6:59 Sunset: 4:57

Comics and Weather, G6-7.

Obituaries, C9.

Fringe activist group could be tied to killing of Border Patrol agent

By Dan Glau and Sean Cotter

GLOBE STAFF

COVENTRY, Vt. — The fatal shooting of a Border Patrol agent in Vermont appears to be tied to a fringe group of vegan activists on the West Coast whose members have been linked to at least three other slayings, including the murder of a state's witness in California and the killing of an older couple in Pennsylvania, according to court records and interviews with associates.

In the time since agent David Maland was gunned down near the Canadian border, authori-

ties have begun to connect the dots among a series of violent incidents in three states that date to 2022, and possibly earlier.

Among those linked to both the activist group and the recent mayhem are Teresa Youngblut, who has been charged in the fatal Vermont shooting of Maland, and her fiancé, Maximilian B. Snyder, who was arrested this month on a separate murder charge in California.

A federal judge in Vermont on Thursday ordered Youngblut held indefinitely in connection

VERMONT, Page A10

VOL. 307, NO. 31

Suggested retail price \$4.00



0 947725 4