

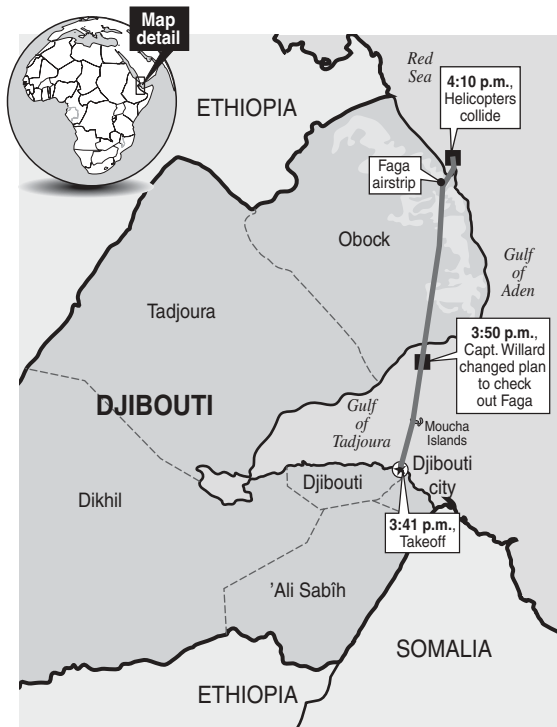
Deadly mission

Eight U.S. Marines and two airmen died Feb. 17 when two CH-53E heavy-lift helicopters collided off the coast of Africa during a training mission. The Marines were part of the Heavy Helicopter Squadron 464 based in Jacksonville, N.C., and commanded by Lt. Col. Jeff Martinez. Military investigators blamed the accident on pilot error and officers inadequate supervision of the unit in Djibouti.

The flight mission

The U.S. Marine CH-53E helicopters that collided Feb. 17 were stationed at Camp Lemonnier in Djibouti's capital city, also called Djibouti.

Approximation of actual flight path based on survivors' testimony



Mission chain of command

The diagram shows the chain of command responsible for the training mission and crew aboard helicopters Condor 10 and Condor 11.

Maj. Bartlett Ludlow
Officer in charge of unit in Djibouti

Condor 10

***Capt. Bryan D. Willard**, flight leader

***1st Lt. Brandon R. Dronet**, co-pilot
***Lance Cpl. Nicholas J. Sovie**, crew chief
***Sgt. James F. Fordyce**
***Cpl. Matthieu Marcellus**
***Senior Airman Alecia S. Good**, radio operator

Condor 11

Capt. Susan Craig, pilot
1st Lt. Heath Ruppert, co-pilot
***Lance Cpl. Samuel W. Large Jr.**, crew chief
***Sgt. Donnie Leo F. Levens**
***Sgt. Jonathan Eric McColley**
***Staff Sgt. Luis M. Melendez Sanchez**, radio operator

* Killed in the accident

The dead

Flight crew of Condor 10



Capt. Bryan D. Willard, 33



1st Lt. Brandon R. Dronet, 33



Lance Cpl. Nicholas J. Sovie, 20



Sgt. James F. Fordyce, 22



Cpl. Matthieu Marcellus, 31



Senior Airman Alecia S. Good, 23

Flight crew of Condor 11



Lance Cpl. Samuel W. Large Jr., 21



Sgt. Donnie Leo F. Levens, 25



Sgt. Jonathan Eric McColley, 23



Staff Sgt. Luis M. Melendez Sanchez, 33

Super Stallion helicopter

The heavy-load CH-53E Super Stallion helicopter carries U.S. Marines, other troops and equipment.



- **Engines:** Three 4,400-horsepower gas turbines
- **Length:** 99 feet
- **Range:** 621 miles without refueling; can refuel in midair
- **Speed:** 172 mph

- **Crew:** Two pilots plus one aircrew specialist
- **Carries:** 55 passengers or 16 tons of cargo; can lift and carry a downed airplane or helicopter
- **Used since:** 1981

Major accidents of CH-53E helicopters

The U.S. Navy cited human error and aircrew mistakes among the causes of the five major accidents involving CH-53E heavy-lift helicopters during the last five years.

The shortfalls of supervisory personnel played a part in four of the accidents, while the failure of aircraft equipment or materials was a factor in one accident.

The military defines major, or "class A," accidents as those resulting in a destroyed aircraft, damages of \$1 million or more, a fatality or total disability.

Fiscal year	CH-53E flight hours	Number of accidents
2002	36,144	1
2003	37,340	0
2004	35,010	2
2005	34,595	1
2006	32,354	1