

Fate unknown for plane crew

WASHINGTON (AP) — An Air Force transport plane with 21 aboard went down Tuesday in the Caribbean Sea off Honduras' coast, and would-be rescuers battled fog and foul weather, the Defense Department said.

The C-130A transport, bound for the Honduran coastal town of Trujillo from Howard Air Base in Panama, went into the

water about 11 a.m. EST, according to Lt. Col. Gene Sands, a Defense Department spokesman.

Sands said "no hostile action was indicated." He said it was unclear whether the plane, which he said was on a routine troop transport mission, crashed or ditched into the sea. He said there was no word on the fate of the estimated 21 military personnel aboard.

"They're in the water," Sands said.

"We can't even get in for sea

rescue because of the weather," he said.

The plane was part of the 440th Tactical Airlift Wing, a reserve unit regularly based at Billy Mitchell Field in Milwaukee, he said. The Pentagon would not have updated information until Wednesday, he said.

An Air Force source, who spoke only on condition he not be identified, described the flight as "a normal rotation of people."

The United States has been holding joint military exercises with the Honduran Army. The next major one, Big Pine III, is scheduled to begin this spring. A starting date for the maneuvers has not been set.

The United States has maintained a troop strength ranging from 1,000 to more than 5,000 in Honduras since the exercises began, following the 1979 revolution that placed the Sandinista government into power.

Wyden urges 15-hour polling

WASHINGTON (AP) — U.S. Rep. Ron Wyden of Oregon introduced legislation Tuesday requiring establishment of uniform poll closing hours for presidential elections.

The bill, the Fair Voting Rights Act, calls for a 15-hour voting day running from 8 a.m. to 11 p.m. in the East and from 5 a.m. to 8 p.m. on the West Coast.

"The only way we are going to get uniform poll closing legislation through the Congress is to make it simple and workable," Wyden said. "My legislation requires East Coast polls to stay open only three hours later than they do currently and West Coast polls to open only three hours earlier than at present."

Wyden, a Democrat from Portland, said the need for such legislation was demonstrated last fall when the outcome of the presidential election was reported before West Coast polls closed.

"With computers and sophisticated polling techniques, national elections are being called earlier and earlier," Wyden said.

Both President Ronald Reagan and Democratic challenger Walter Mondale agreed not to make any election-night statements until polls closed on the West Coast.

"But that didn't stop the networks from calling the election by 5 p.m. Western time," Wyden said.

Last week, the House Elections Task Force announced that the three major networks had agreed not to use exit polls to project or characterize election results in a state until the polls close in that state.

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