

# Plane: Sheriff's Office will continue to search

Continued from Page 1A

Washington, heading to the mouth of the Columbia River.

The Coast Guard said the last cellphone use from the pilot's phone was at 3:42 p.m. in the vicinity of the crash site.

"A very proficient pilot, but it looks like we might have had an unfortunate circumstance," Clatsop County Sheriff Tom Bergin said.

Allen Kenitzer, a Federal Aviation Administration spokesman, confirmed the missing plane. No flight plan had been filed, he said.

### The search

Eyewitnesses reported that the plane — a 1941 North American AT-6A military trainer with a polished aluminum body, a red nose and tail, and a 40-foot wingspan — plunged into the river at roughly 4 p.m. Wednesday.

The Sheriff's Office and the U.S. Coast Guard scanned the area shortly afterward. Though rescue teams did not find the aircraft, "we did find lots of oil dots yesterday coming up from the surface," Bergin said Thursday.

On Thursday, the Coast Guard performed a first-light aerial search, and the Sheriff's Office dispatched a boat, but to no avail. Strong river current has precluded divers from searching the water.

The Coast Guard said crews searched for more than 12 hours over the course of Wednesday and Thursday, conducting 10 searches and covering 387 trackline miles. But the agency focuses on rescue; this case is now a recovery.

### 'Heartfelt compassion'

"With heartfelt compassion for the friends and families of the two people on board, our thoughts and prayers are with them during this difficult time," Petty Officer 1st Class Starr Franklin, operations unit controller at Coast Guard Sector Columbia River, said in a statement.

The National Transportation Safety Board is investigating the crash, according to the Coast Guard.

The Sheriff's Office will continue to work through the coming days to locate the aircraft, Bergin said.

"We're just trying to do everything we can to get these families some closure," he said. "We're not giving up. We hope we find something."



Joshua Bessex/The Daily Astorian

Authorities search the Columbia River after reports of a small plane crash Wednesday.



Photo courtesy of Clatsop County Sheriff Tom Bergin  
Strong river current has kept divers from searching the water.



Joshua Bessex/The Daily Astorian

The search continued by and air and water Thursday.

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