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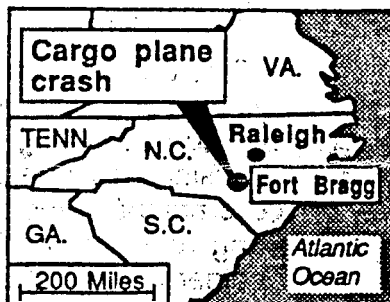
CARGO PLANE CRASHES: An extraction parachute deploys from a crashing C-130 during a tank-dropping demonstration at Fort Bragg, N.C., on Wednesday.

Cargo plane crashes, burns in Fort Bragg maneuver; five die

FORT BRAGG, N.C. (AP) — A C-130 cargo plane performing a tank-dropping maneuver crashed and burned on a dirt runway Wednesday, killing five servicemen but stopping 100 yards short of bleachers filled with spectators.

Four of six Air Force crewmen on the plane were killed, as well as an Army soldier on the ground, said Capt. Brian Irving of Pope Air Force Base, where the four-engine turboprop was based.

Irving said three crewmen were taken by helicopter to Womack Community Hospital at Fort Bragg. Sgt. Lori Cogan of the Fort Bragg Public Affairs Office later said one of those crewmen had died. The two surviving crewmen were being transferred to Fort



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Sam Houston, Texas.

Irving said the soldier killed on the ground was one of two men in a military vehicle hit by the plane after it skidded 1,000 yards down a dirt runway and into some trees. He said he did not know what happened to the second man.

The plane was displaying a technique in which a parachute is used to pull a tank or other vehicle out the rear cargo door while the plane is only a few feet off the ground, officials said. The maneuver, performed in front of a crowd including families of 82nd Airborne Division troopers, was open to the public.

Capt. Donald Sensing of the public information office at Pope Air Force Base, where the plane is based, said landing gear is always extended for the maneuver and it was not unusual for the wheels to hit the ground.

"We really saw what it didn't do," Sensing said. "The aircraft should have gained altitude, but it did not. Then, the aircraft went out of sight and the next thing we saw was a ball of fire."