

Former Black Hawk Helicopter Pilot's opinions on Contributing Factors of the DCA mid air collision on January 30, 2025

Former Black Hawk Helicopter Pilot, Elizabeth McCormick, lists 3 contributing factors based on her expertise and is available for interviews.

DALLAS, TX, UNITED STATES, January 30, 2025 /EINPresswire.com/ -- Former U.S. Army Black Hawk Pilot, now motivational speaker and safety expert [Elizabeth McCormick](#) has weighed in on the tragic mid-air collision involving an American Airlines regional jet and a U.S. Army Black Hawk helicopter near Reagan National Airport (DCA).



Three Black Hawk Helicopters in formation flight

“This is a tragedy for our country, the aviation industry, the figure skating community, the military, and every single passenger, crew member, and their families. Politics had NOTHING to do with this. Please do not politicize this tragedy. Instead, we must focus on what went wrong and what can be done to prevent future incidents,” said McCormick.

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While investigations by the FAA, NTSB, and the Department of Defense will be ongoing, McCormick has identified three key factors that, in her expert opinion, contributed to the collision:

1. Insufficient Crew for Visual Flight Operations

The Black Hawk helicopter was reportedly operating with a minimum crew of three. However, for optimal safety

during visual flight operations, the crew should include four personnel—specifically, two crew chiefs responsible for clearing airspace.

"In a visual flight plan, it is the crew chiefs' responsibility to scan for and clear the airspace. A fourth crew member enhances visibility and situational awareness, reducing the risk of mid-air conflicts."

2. The Black Hawk Was Flying Too High

The DCA airspace route for helicopters is designated for a flight altitude of 200 feet. However, this collision reportedly occurred at an altitude of 350–400 feet.



Three Black Hawk Helicopters in mission

"If the reports are accurate, the Black Hawk was operating above its designated altitude, which placed it in potential conflict with commercial air traffic. This discrepancy must be investigated further."

3. Air Traffic Control (ATC) Communication Could Have Been More Precise

According to reports, air traffic controllers asked the Black Hawk crew whether they had visual contact with the CRJ700. However, McCormick believes ATC should have specified the exact location of the aircraft to avoid confusion as there were TWO commercial airliners in their area. She suspects that the crew had visual contact on the aircraft taking off, not the one that was collided with. You can clearly see the aircraft taking off in the foreground in the video that has been released.

"Given the complexity of the airspace, ATC should have directed the Black Hawk's attention to the precise location of the CRJ—for example, 'at your 5 o'clock.' There was not just one aircraft in the area; there was a departing plane and a descending plane. Clearer instructions could have helped avoid the collision."

The Black Hawk Helicopter is a maneuverable aircraft and could have avoided the airliner and this tragic loss of life.

A Call for Safety Improvements, Not Speculation

McCormick urges the public and policymakers to allow investigators to conduct a thorough analysis and focus on [aviation safety](#) improvements rather than speculation.

"We owe it to those who lost their lives to learn from this tragedy and make the necessary changes to prevent it from happening again. This is about safety, accountability, and honoring the victims—not politics."

As part of these necessary changes, McCormick is calling on Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth to immediately require that all U.S. Army Black Hawk helicopters flying under Visual Flight Plans have a MINIMUM crew of four—including two crew chiefs—moving forward.

"Had there been two crew chiefs on board, as is optimal, the likelihood of this collision could have been reduced. This simple change can help save lives and prevent future tragedies. I strongly urge Secretary Hegseth to implement this requirement immediately."

The FAA and NTSB are expected to release preliminary findings in the coming months. In the meantime, McCormick remains available for expert commentary on military aviation procedures, air traffic safety, and flight operations.

For media inquiries or to schedule an interview with Elizabeth McCormick, please contact Elizabeth directly at:

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