

Plane's landing raises questions

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By Associated Press



HONOLULU — Sleeping pilots? A communications breakdown in the cockpit? A medical emergency? Hijackers?

Fearing the worst, air traffic controllers alerted the military about a commercial jet flying from Honolulu to Hilo at 21,000 feet with 40 passengers that missed its landing and failed to respond to nearly a dozen calls.

Despite a silent cockpit on go! airlines Flight 1002 over a span of 17 minutes, fighter jets were never scrambled to assist or escort, raising questions about a possible breakdown in security measures.

“Didn’t we learn our lesson from 9/11?” asked Joseph Gutheinz, a former inspector for the Federal Aviation Administration and the U.S. Transportation Department. “Why is it that there wasn’t an interceptor up there trying to find out what was going on with that plane?”

“If we don’t get it now, what about next week when somebody does hijack a plane?” he said. “All that tells you is that Hawaii is wide-open for a terrorist attack.”

The FAA said Flight 1002, which left Honolulu at 9:16 a.m. Feb. 13, overshot Hilo International Airport by 15 miles.

The pilots are being investigated by the FAA and the National Transportation Safety Board for possibly falling asleep on the 214-mile flight. They have also been grounded by go!’s parent company, Phoenix-based Mesa Air Group.

In air traffic control recordings, the controller is heard repeatedly trying to contact the pilots.

The NTSB found the aircraft had experienced no mechanical problems and that skies were clear that morning. The agency’s preliminary report, however, gave no conclusion of why the plane overshot the airport.
