

On November 27, 2004, a flight operated by Blackwater Aviation and designated "Blackwater 61" crashed in a canyon in a remote area of Afghanistan, killing the members of the flight crew and three U.S. military personnel who were passengers. According to government investigative reports and other documents obtained by the Committee, the crash and the deaths of the crew and passengers were caused by a combination of reckless conduct by the Blackwater pilots and multiple mistakes by Blackwater, including hiring unqualified and inexperienced pilots, failure to file flight plans, and failure to have proper equipment for tracking and locating missing aircraft.

This memorandum summarizes what is known about the crash of Blackwater 61. It is based in large part on two federal investigative reports. One report, by a joint U.S. Air Force and Army task force, has never been publicly released. The other report, by the National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB), has been publicly released, but has received little attention. The Committee staff also reviewed internal Blackwater e-mails in examining the causes of the crash.

### **Documents and Links**

- [Committee Memo: The Crash of Blackwater Flight 61](#)
- [Statement of Col. Jeanette McMahon](#)
- [Statement of Tracy Grogan](#)
- [Collateral Investigation Board Report](#)
- [Collateral Investigation Board Presentation](#)
- [Control Tower Transcript for Blackwater Flight 61](#)