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EXTRA EDITION ♦ FEBRUARY 1-2, 2003

# Shuttle breaks up in flames over Texas Space tragedy

## 'Columbia is lost; there are no survivors' president announces



Photos by The Associated Press

Crew aboard Columbia's Spacehab: astronaut David Brown, Israeli astronaut Ilan Ramon, commander Rick Husband, astronaut Kalpana Chawla, pilot William McCool, astronaut Michael Anderson, and astronaut Laurel Clark, foreground from left, wave to a television camera on Jan. 20.

Crew of seven, including an Israeli, was minutes from landing in Florida.

**C**APE CANAVERAL, Fla. (AP) — Space shuttle Columbia broke apart in flames 200,000 feet over Texas on Saturday, killing all seven astronauts just minutes before they were to land in Florida.

"Columbia is lost; there are no survivors," President Bush announced.

Bill Readdy, NASA's associate administrator for space flight, said it was too early to speculate about what destroyed the shuttle. A senior U.S. official, speaking on condition of anonymity, said there was no immediate indication of terrorism.

NASA Administrator Sean O'Keefe, his voice breaking at times as he spoke, said Bush had talked to the families of the astronauts.

"We trust the prayers of the nation will be with them and with their families. A more courageous group of people you could not have hoped to know than the families of these crew members, an extraordinary, extraordinary group of astronauts who gave their lives," he said. Neither he nor Readdy took reporters' questions.

The six Americans and Israel's first astronaut aboard Columbia were 16 minutes from landing when the shuttle broke apart. They had been expected to land at Kennedy Space Center in Florida at 9:16 a.m. Fort Wayne time.

At 9 a.m., Mission Control abruptly lost all data and voice contact with the shuttle and crew. At the same time, residents of Texas, Arkansas and Louisiana reported hearing "a big bang" and seeing flames in the sky.

The final radio transmission between Mission Control and the shuttle gave no indication of a catastrophic failure.

Mission Control radioed: "Columbia, Houston, we see your fire-pressure messages and we did not copy your last."



*"We trust the prayers of the nation will be with them and with their families. A more courageous group of people you could not have hoped to know than the families of these crew members, an extraordinary, extraordinary group of astronauts who gave their lives."*

—President Bush, said in his address to the Nation on Saturday

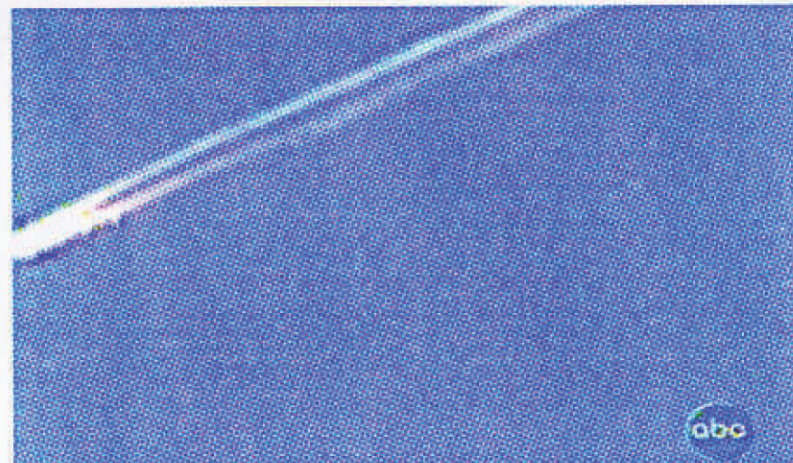
Columbia's response: "Roger, uh . . ."

Then the transmission breaks off.

Television footage showed a bright light, followed by smoke plumes streaking diagonally through the sky. Debris appeared to break off into separate balls of light as it continued downward. NASA declared an emergency after losing contact with the crew and within minutes said search teams had been sent to the Dallas-Fort Worth area.

In Nacogdoches, Texas, residents found bits of metal strewn across the city. Dentist Jeff Hancock said a metal

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▶ Israeli astronaut pride of his country. 11A



▶ Native of India brought joy to her homeland. 8A

▶ Officials say there's no indication of terrorism. 8A



▶ Bits of debris found strewn across small Texas city. 11A

▶ Explosion, damage possible cause of tragedy. 8A



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▶ Columbia revives painful memories of Challenger. Back of section

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Right: A series of the vapor trail is shown in this image from television on Saturday. NASA declared an emergency and feared the worst after losing communication with space shuttle Columbia as the ship soared over Texas several minutes before its scheduled Florida landing Saturday morning.

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