

Beat: Local

Chinese tourist dies in Turkey hot air balloon crash

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USPA News - A Chinese woman was killed Wednesday and eleven other tourists were injured when two hot air balloons crash-landed in central Turkey, local authorities said, just over a year after three Brazilian tourists died in another ballooning accident in the same area. The latest accident happened at around 8:15 a.m. local time on Wednesday when two hot air balloons were affected by strong winds while flying over the Gövrükçü Valley in the touristic region of Cappadocia, which is located in Central Anatolia.

People who saw the accident alerted the emergency services by calling 112. Nevşehir Governor Mehmet Ceylan said the accident occurred when the balloons experienced crosswinds while descending, causing both to make hard landings. The governor said a 23-year-old Chinese tourist was killed and six tourists from China and Malaysia were injured, but medical officials later raised the number of people hospitalized to eleven, including two who were critically injured. Several other passengers were treated at the scene but did not require hospitalization. In addition to the accident, the private Dogan news agency said that officials at the scene had attacked journalists and attempted to take their memory cards which contained photographs. The report said the journalists had filed a criminal complaint following the attack, but it did not say whether any of the journalists had been injured. Hot air balloon accidents are fairly uncommon, although deadly crashes have taken place in recent years, including in Cappadocia where the ballooning industry had already suffered after two fatal accidents since 2009. Three Brazilian tourists were killed in May 2013 when a hot air balloon crashed in Cappadocia, just a few years after a Briton died in another crash. Prior to the accident last year, critics had expressed concern over the large number of hot air balloons navigating at the same time in Cappadocia, as well as unclear traffic rules and inexperienced pilots. Nonetheless, balloon trips remain relatively safe despite deadly crashes in Egypt and New Zealand over the past few years. Nineteen people were killed in February 2013 when a hot air balloon caught fire and crashed near the Egyptian city of Luxor, making it the world's deadliest ballooning disaster in history. The second deadliest disaster occurred in August 1989 when two balloons collided over Australia's Northern Territory, causing one of the balloons to crash to the ground and killing all thirteen people on board.

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