SECOND WORLD WAR PLANE CRASHES INTO NEW YORK'S HUDSON RIVER

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The second world war plane that crashed into the Hudson river on Friday night has been raised, after the body of its pilot was recovered, authorities said.

Rescue divers removed the body of 56-year-old William Gordon, of Key West, Florida, from the river late on Friday. The single-seat P-47 Thunderbolt crashed near the George Washington bridge between New York and New Jersey, according to New York Police department, which responded to the incident.

On Saturday, officials supervised the lifting of the plane's wreckage from the river. The cause of the crash was being investigated by the FAA and the National Transportation Safety Board.

The aircraft, owned by the American Airpower Museum, was being flown as part of celebrations for its 75th anniversary. The aircraft completed a partial loop before it plummeted into the water around 7.30pm, authorities said.

The plane was part of a trio, with a P-40 and a photo plane, that took off from Republic Airport in Farmingdale, Long Island. The other two planes landed safely, according to the Federal Aviation Administration.

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The veteran air show performer was remembered as an “extraordinary” and “nationally respected” pilot.

Scott Clyman of the American Airpower Museum said in a statement on Saturday that Gordon understood the “powerful message” historic aircraft represent “in telling the story of American courage and valor”. The museum is celebrating the 75th anniversary of the P-47 Thunderbolt this weekend at Jones Beach.

Gary Lewi, a spokesman for the museum, told the Associated Press the plane had apparently suffered an “inflight engine failure” and attempted an emergency landing.

A witness, Siqi Li, told the Daily News that she thought the smoke was a part of the show.

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“It made kind of a U-turn, and then there was a stream of smoke coming from it,” she said. “It was tilting down toward the water. I thought they were doing some sort of trick. I didn’t realise it at first, but it was a plane crash.”

Seperately, witnesses told NBC New York they saw the pilot flail in the water before the weight of the plane carried him down.

“He tried to get out, and then it pulled him right down inside,” Nick Ciccolella said. The station published a video of the incident recorded by a witness. The footage shows the plane splash into the Hudson as someone off-camera asks: “Did it just crash?”.

The P-47 Thunderbolt is one of the heaviest single-engine fighter aircrafts in history. As many as 15,000 were built in the early 1940s for the US and the allied nations, more than half at a plant in Farmingdale, where the American Airpower Museum now sits.

The restored P-47 was one of only a handful still in existence, according to museum. The plane flew locally and occasionally at air shows.

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