

Plane crashes off the coast of Jamaica

The Socata TBM-700 private jet took off from Rochester, New York, destined for Naples, Florida, before it went off course.

Air traffic controllers were unable to make contact with the airliner and two fighter jets were sent to investigate from 11.30am local time (3:30pm GMT).

Attempts to contact the plane's occupants were unsuccessful. It is believed the plane entered, and exited Cuban airspace before heading towards Jamaica, changing direction before losing altitude suddenly. A North American air defence (NORAD) spokesman said it was not possible for the jet fighter pilots to see inside the plane before it crashed as the windows were frosted or fogged over. It is not known how many people were on board the plane when it came down 40 miles northeast of Port Antonio. The plane was flying at an altitude of 25,000 feet southbound over the Caribbean Sea. UPDATE. The Jamaica Defence Force (JDF) is reporting that search teams have detected an oil slick in the waters North East of Port Antonio, Portland where a small aircraft crashed this afternoon.

The search team comprises two vessels from the JDF and an aircraft.

Meanwhile, captain Mahatma Williams, the acting staff officer for operations at the JDF, says a US vessel is enroute to Jamaica to join in the search.

It is expected to be on site to join the operation tomorrow.

Williams also said that a request has been sent to the United States Embassy in Kingston for further assistance where possible.

At a press conference at the JDF Up Park camp headquarters a short while ago, Leroy Lindsay, the director general of the Civil Aviation Authority dismissed reports that the ill-fated plane had made contact with local aviation authorities.