English articles

It's useful to read articles in English, even if you don't understand every word - it will help you increase your vocabulary and keep up to date with things happening in English-speaking countries!

*This page will be updated on **Mondays**. The first article is aimed at a B1 and upwards level and the second article is aimed at a B2 and upwards level*

Articles of the week

What can the 'black box' tell us about plane crashes?

By BEN FINLEY Associated Press

It's one of the most important pieces of forensic evidence following a plane crash: The so-called “black box.”

There are actually two of these remarkably sturdy devices: the cockpit voice recorder and the flight

data recorder. And they're typically orange, not black.

Federal investigators on Friday recovered the black boxes from the passenger jet that crashed in the Potomac River just outside Washington on Wednesday, while authorities were still searching for similar devices in the military helicopter that also went down.

One recovered flight data recorder was in good condition and its information is expected to be downloaded shortly. Water had gotten inside the cockpit voice recorder, which will make downloading the data more difficult. The collision killed 67 people in the deadliest U.S. aviation disaster since 2001.

Here is an explanation of what black boxes are and what they can do:

What are black boxes?

The cockpit voice recorder and the flight data recorder are tools that help investigators reconstruct the events that lead up to a plane crash.

They're orange in color to make them easier to find in wreckage, sometimes at great ocean depths. They're usually installed a plane's tail section, which is considered the most survivable part of the aircraft, according to the National Transportation Safety Board's website.

They're also equipped with beacons that activate when immersed in water and can transmit from depths of 14,000 feet (4,267 meters). While the battery that powers the beacon will run down after about one month, there's no definitive shelf-life for the data itself, NTSB investigators told The Associated Press in 2014.

For example, black boxes of an Air France flight that crashed in the Atlantic Ocean in 2009 were found two years later from a depth of more than 10,000 feet, and technicians were able to recover most of the information.

If a black box has been submerged in seawater, technicians will keep them submerged in fresh water to wash away the corrosive salt. If water seeps in, the devices must be carefully dried for hours or even days using a vacuum oven to prevent memory chips from cracking.

The electronics and memory are checked, and any necessary repairs made. Chips are scrutinized under a microscope.

What does the cockpit voice recorder do?

The cockpit voice recorder collects radio transmissions and sounds such as the pilot's voices and engine noises, according to the NTSB's website.

Depending on what happened, investigators may pay close attention to the engine noise, stall warnings and other clicks and pops, the NTSB said. And from those sounds, investigators can often determine engine speed and the failure of some systems.

Investigators are also listening to conversations between the pilots and crew and communications with air traffic control. Experts make a meticulous transcript of the voice recording, which can take up to a week.

What does the flight data recorder do?

The flight data recorder monitors a plane's altitude, airspeed and heading, according to the NTSB.

Those factors are among at least 88 parameters that newly built planes must monitor.

Some can collect the status of more than 1,000 other characteristics, from a wing's flap position to the smoke alarms. The NTSB said it can generate a computer animated video reconstruction of the flight from the information collected.

NTBS investigators told the AP in 2014 that a flight data recorder carries 25 hours of information, including prior flights within that time span, which can sometimes provide hints about the cause of a mechanical failure on a later flight. An initial assessment of the data is provided to investigators within 24 hours, but analysis will continue for weeks more.

What are the origins of the black box?

At least two people have been credited with creating devices that record what happens on an airplane.

One is French aviation engineer François Hussenot. In the 1930s, he found a way to record a plane's speed, altitude and other parameters onto photographic film, according to the website for European plane-maker Airbus.

In the 1950s, Australian scientist David Warren came up with the idea for the cockpit voice recorder, according to his 2010 AP obituary.

Warren had been investigating the crash of the world's first commercial jet airliner, the Comet, in 1953, and thought it would be helpful for airline accident investigators to have a recording of voices in the cockpit, the Australian Department of Defence said in a statement after his death.

Warren designed and constructed a prototype in 1956. But it took several years before officials understood just how valuable the device could be and began installing them in commercial airlines worldwide. Warren's father had been killed in a plane crash in Australia in 1934.

Why the name “black box”?

Some have suggested that it stems from Hussenot's device because it used film and “ran continuously in a light-tight box, hence the name 'black box,'” according to Airbus, which noted that orange was the box's chosen color from the beginning to make it easy to find.

Other theories include the boxes turning black when they get charred in a crash, the Smithsonian Magazine wrote in 2019.

“The truth is much more mundane,” the magazine wrote. “In the post-World War II field of electronic circuitry, black box became the ubiquitous term for a self-contained electronic device whose input and output were more defining than its internal operations.”

The media continues to use the term, the magazine wrote, “because of the sense of mystery it conveys in the aftermath of an air disaster.”

Trump's AI ambition and China's DeepSeek overshadow an AI summit in Paris

By SYLVIE CORBET and KELVIN CHAN Associated Press

PARIS (AP) — The geopolitics of artificial intelligence will be in focus at a major summit in France where world leaders, executives and experts will hammer out pledges on guiding the development of the rapidly advancing technology.

It's the latest in a series of global dialogues around AI governance, but one that comes at a fresh inflection point as China's buzzy and budget-friendly DeepSeek chatbot shakes up the industry.

U.S. Vice President JD Vance — making his first trip abroad since taking office — will attend the Paris AI Action Summit starting Feb. 10, while China's President Xi Jinping will be sending his special envoy, signaling high stakes for the meeting.

Here's a breakdown:

Summit basics

Heads of state and top government officials, tech bosses and researchers are gathering in Paris for the two-day summit hosted by French President Emmanuel Macron and Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi. The event aims to address how to harness artificial intelligence's potential so that it benefits everyone, while containing the technology's myriad risks.

European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen is attending, along with company officials from 80 countries, including German Chancellor Olaf Scholz, Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau, OpenAI CEO Sam Altman, Microsoft President Brad Smith and Google CEO Sundar Pichai.

Tesla chief Elon Musk, who attended the inaugural 2023 summit at former codebreaking base Bletchley Park in England, and DeepSeek founder Liang Wenfeng have been invited, but it's unclear if either will attend.

Panel talks and workshops at the Grand Palais venue on Monday will be followed by a dinner at the Elysee presidential palace for world leaders and CEOs. Leaders and company bosses are expected to give speeches at Tuesday's closing session.

What's at stake?

More than two years after ChatGPT 's debut, generative AI continues to make astounding advances at breakneck speed. The technology that powers all-purpose chatbots is transforming many aspects of life with its ability to spit out high-quality text, images or video, or carry out complex tasks.

The 2023 summit in the U.K. resulted in a non-binding pledge by 28 nations to tackle AI risks. A follow-up meeting hosted by South Korea last year secured another pledge to set up a network of public AI safety institutes to advance research and testing.

AI safety is still on the agenda in Paris, with an expert group reporting back on general purpose AI's possible extreme dangers.

But this time organizers are expanding the discussion to more countries, and widening the debate to a range of other AI-related topics. Like previous editions, this summit won't produce any binding regulation.

“The summit comes at a time when many are trying to position themselves in the international competition,” Macron told reporters, according to La Provence newspaper. “It's about establishing the rules of the game. AI cannot be the Wild West.”

The deliverables

Organizers are working on getting countries to sign a joint political declaration gathering commitments for more ethical, democratic and environmentally sustainable AI, according to Macron's office. But it's unclear whether the U.S. would agree to such a measure.

A public-interest partnership named “Current AI” is to be launched with an initial $400 million investment. The initiative aims at raising $2.5 billion over the next five years for the public-private partnership involving governments, businesses and philanthropic groups that will provide open-source access to databases, software and other tools for “trusted” AI actors, according to Macron's office.

Macron's team wants to shift the focus away from the race to develop better-than-human artificial intelligence through sheer computing power and, instead, open up access to data that can help AI solve problems like cancer or long COVID.

“We now have this incredible opportunity to figure out not only how we should mitigate the potential harms from artificial intelligence, but also how we can ensure that it's used to improve people's lives,” said Martin Tisné, the summit's envoy for public interest AI.

Trump's team

U.S. President Donald Trump has spoken of his desire to make the U.S. the “world capital of artificial intelligence” by tapping its oil and gas reserves to feed the energy-hungry technology. Meanwhile, he has moved to withdraw the U.S. — again — from the Paris climate agreement and revoked former President Joe Biden's executive order for AI guardrails.

Trump is replacing it with his own AI policy designed to maintain America's global leadership by reducing regulatory barriers and building AI systems free of “ideological bias.”

The U.S. position might undermine any joint communique, said Nick Reiners, senior geotechnology analyst at the Eurasia Group.

“Trump is against the very idea of global governance,” Reiners said. “It's one thing to get countries to agree that AI should have guardrails and that AI safety is something worth caring about. But they've widened the scope to talk about the future of work and the environment and inclusivity and so on — a whole range of concepts. So it's hard to imagine getting a widespread agreement on such a broad range of subjects.”

China's role

Chinese leader Xi is sending Vice Premier Zhang Guoqing, who's been elevated to the role of Xi's special representative.

It's a big step up from the 2023 Bletchley meeting, when the Chinese government sent the vice minister of science and technology. It signifies that Xi wants China to play a bigger role in global AI governance as Trump pulls back, Reiners said.

DeepSeek 's release last month stunned the world because of its ability to rival Western players like ChatGPT. It also escalated the wider geopolitical showdown between Beijing and Washington over tech supremacy.

Trump said DeepSeek was a " wake-up call " for the U.S. tech industry and his AI advisor David Sacks accused DeepSeek of training its model on stolen OpenAI data. The DeepSeek chatbot app now faces investigations, and in some cases, bans in the U.S. and a number of other countries over privacy and security concerns.

Yet the rise of DeepSeek, which built its open source AI model at a fraction of the cost and with fewer chips, also puts China's interests in line with France's.

French organizers said "the summit aims at promoting an ambitious French and European AI strategy" as advances in the sector have been led by the U.S. and China. Macron hopes to make room for others, including French startup Mistral, which also uses an open source AI model.

"DeepSeek is being seen as a kind of vindication of this idea that you don't have to necessarily invest hundreds of billions of dollars in in chips and data centers," Reiners said.

Transatlantic tensions

Another showdown could involve Brussels, which has long been a thorn in the side of U.S.-based Big Tech companies, cracking down with antitrust penalties against the likes of Google, Apple and Meta. Trump lashed out at last month's World Economic Forum with "very big complaints" about the EU's multibillion-dollar fines, calling them a tax on American companies.

More recently, the European Union's artificial intelligence regulation has met resistance from the companies. The EU recently unveiled a non-binding "code of practice" for its AI Act but Meta's top lobbyist said the company, which owns Facebook and Instagram, won't sign up.

The EU guidelines, intended to standardize how the AI Act's regulations are applied across the 27-nation bloc, are "unworkable" and the continent's regulatory environment is "pushing Europe to the sidelines," Chief Global Affairs Officer Joel Kaplan told a Brussels event.

Chan reported from London. AP writer John Leicester in Paris contributed to this report.

Article Archive

- Finance
- Work & Business
- Society
- Science
- Culture
- Miscellaneous