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# Jet Crash Kills 153 in Spain

## Airliner Wrecks On Takeoff in Madrid

**By Harold Heckle The Associated Press**

MADRID, Spain — A Spanish airliner bound for the Canary Islands at the height of the vacation season crashed, burned and broke into pieces Wednesday while trying to take off from Madrid, killing 153 people on board, officials said.

There were only 19 survivors of the midafternoon crash, Development Minister Magdalena Alvarez said. It was Spain's deadliest air disaster in more than 20 years.

A police officer said the bodies were so hot that police could barely touch them and told El Pais newspaper the shattered wreckage bore no resemblance to a plane.

Dozens of ambulances rushed to the site as columns of smoke billowed from the wreckage. The prime minister broke off his vacation in southern Spain and returned to Madrid, heading straight for the airport.

"The scene is devastating," said Pablo Albella, a rescue worker. "The fuselage is destroyed. The plane burned. I have seen a kilometer of charred land and few whole pieces of the fuselage. It is all destruction."

Spanair Flight JK5022 — bound for Las Palmas during the height of Europe's summer vacation season — was just barely airborne when it veered right, crashed and broke into pieces, reports said.

Spanair spokesman Sergio Allard told a news conference that the cause of the crash was not known. The airline said the plane carried 172 people in all.

El Pais said the plane left an hour late because of technical problems. When it tried to take off, it got slightly off the ground but crashed near the end of the runway, El Pais said, quoting an employee of the national airport authority AENA.



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**VICTOR R. CAIVANO/THE ASSOCIATED PRESS** A plane takes off above the site where a Spanair jet crashed and caught fire on takeoff at Madrid's Barajas airport on Wednesday. The Spanish airliner, carrying 172 people, was bound for the Canary Islands. Officials said 153 people were killed and 19 survived the midafternoon crash.