

by Midway crash findings

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WASHINGTON—Rep. Cardiss Collins [D., Ill.] says she is "comforted" that federal authorities found no evidence of sabotage in their investigation of a plane crash in which 45 persons, including her husband and the wife of a convicted Watergate conspirator, were killed.

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Mrs. Collins, who was elected to succeed her late husband, George, a Democrat representing the 7th District, said the rumors of foul play surrounding the crash were "loose talk" and "mass hysteria."

Among the 40 passengers killed last Dec. 8 when a United Air Lines jetliner crashed short of Midway Airport was Mrs. E. Howard Hunt, wife of the Watergate conspirator who testified before the Senate Watergate committee this week.

Also killed were three of the six crew members and two persons on the ground. The jet rammed into homes near West 70th Place and Lawndale Avenue.

INVESTIGATORS found \$10,000 in \$100 bills belonging to Mrs. Hunt in the wreckage, promoting speculation the plane may have been sabotaged because of Mrs. Hunt's role as a conduit for defense funds paid to the Watergate conspirators.

But the National Transportation Safety Board, in a report yesterday, firmly insisted that "allegations of foul play which have been injected into the publicity surrounding this accident" were unfounded. The board said cockpit-crew error was to blame.

ACCORDING TO THE REPORT, the crew had become distracted by the failure of a minor piece of equipment and had failed to prepare properly for a landing. The Midway control tower directed the crew to abort its landing attempt and make another approach.

As they attempted to pull the jet from its landing descent, the crew forgot to deactivate wing spoilers, putting the plane into a stall and resulting in the crash, the report said.

The cockpit crew included the captain, Wendell L. Whitehouse, 44, the first officer, Walter O. Coble, 43, and the second officer, Barry J. Elder, 31.