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NEWS

ROUND-THE-WORLD SOLO BALLOONIST MISSES HIS LOFTY GOAL

Associated Press



FEELING DEFLATED: Shirley Uliassi (right) and a friend pinpoint on a map where Uliassi's son Kevin landed in Myanmar after ending his attempt to become the first balloonist to circle the world solo. - AP

CHICAGO -- American balloonist Kevin Uliassi's attempt to make history by circling the globe alone ended in disappointment yesterday in a field in Southeast Asia -- more than 13,000 miles from liftoff.

Uliassi, 36, brought his balloon down safely in Myanmar 10 days after beginning his journey from a quarry in northern Illinois. Uliassi ended up about 1,200 miles short of

the solo long-distance record.

Flight spokesman Bo Kemper said he didn't know why Uliassi decided to come down, but Uliassi had said he was unsure whether he had enough fuel and supplies to make it across the Pacific.

Uliassi last communicated with his flight crew in the Chicago suburb of Homewood 13 hours before he landed, when he told them he was going to sleep.

When Uliassi's flight command center noticed he was descending, the crew sought assistance from the State Department, which had the Myanmar government initiate a search-and-rescue mission.

Kemper said officials in Myanmar, formerly known as Burma, told him Uliassi touched down around 5:30 a.m. New York time near some railroad tracks and a road.

Authorities said Uliassi landed 310 miles north of the capital, Yangon.

"It was a controlled descent," Kemper said. "It was



a nice, normal landing."

Last March, Swiss psychiatrist Bertrand Piccard and English balloon instructor Brian Jones became the first to circle the world nonstop in a hot-air balloon, landing safely in Egypt.

This was Uliassi's second try at becoming the first person to circle the globe alone. On his first attempt, in 1997, his balloon ruptured over O'Hare International Airport, forcing him down in Indiana. *AP*

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