



More Pieces to TWA 800 Puzzle

Three years after TWA flight 800 exploded in mid-air over the Atlantic just off Long Island, killing all 230 aboard, evidence is continuing to accumulate that the federal government has deliberately misled the public about the cause of the tragedy. After an investigation that consumed 16 months and devoured \$20 million, federal authorities concluded that an aberrant spark in the plane's center fuel tank triggered the catastrophic explosion. However, in order to reach this conclusion, federal investigators had to discard a significant body of evidence suggesting that the plane was shot down in an act of terrorism and mass murder.

The July 14th-20th edition of the left-wing *Village Voice* quoted an unnamed "missile expert" who worked in the FBI's investigation of the Flight 800 explosion. The expert, a military engineer "who specializes in infrared missile technology," was "made privy to evidence suggesting that TWA 800 could have been shot down." In addition to receiving eyewitness accounts of a "flare-like object" zooming toward the plane shortly before the explosion, the engineer was permitted to inspect the assembled debris from the crash. He has also been "in contact with military labs where, he says, the chemists have been unable to make jet fuel vapor explode"; this undermines the official explanation provided by the National Transportation and Safety Board (NTSB), which maintains that fuel vapor in the ill-fated plane's center fuel tank somehow ignited. The engineer concludes that there is a "70-percent chance" that the plane was shot down by a shoulder-launched missile.

Mystery Boat

The July 12th issue of the *New York Observer* referred to a mysterious "30-knot track," the radar signature of a boat "that was the closest vessel to the 747 when it exploded and that then headed out to sea on a beeline from right under the burning wreckage." In the immediate aftermath of the crash, the "mystery boat" headed directly out to sea on a south-southwest course, "even as other boats rushed to the crash to help out," explained the *Observer* account. "It was nearly 9 o'clock at night, not the usual time for an excursion."

The "30-knot track" is particularly intriguing to retired Navy Commander William S. Donaldson, a former Judge Advocate General investigator who has conducted inquiries into 12 Navy air crashes. Upon viewing the data, "I looked at that and said, 'Wow, what is that guy doing leaving the scene?' And of course I assumed he was identified." However, when he asked FBI agent Steve Bongardt whether investigators were able to interview the occupants of every boat in the region of the crash, Commander Donaldson was told that the question couldn't be answered without clearance "from a higher authority."

"It would seem that even the FBI secretly regarded the 30-knot track as suspicious," said the *Observer*. "For six months, the government conducted a \$5.5 million trawling operation of the waters surrounding the crash, using scallop boats. Commander Donaldson obtained documents left by the FBI on one scalloper, showing that the FBI was specifically looking for shoulder-fired Stinger missile parts — notably a Stinger ejector motor — in what the FBI called a 'possible missile launch zone' 2.7 miles from the crash. That circle included the mystery boat." The FBI also seized some boats to inspect their floorboards for burns typical of backwash from a shoulder-fired rocket. However, investigators have been singularly incurious regarding the unidentified fleeing boat.

"If it's a legitimate criminal investigation, with a possibility of 230 homicides," observes Commander Donaldson, "how do you close the investigation when you haven't identified the boat that was within missile firing range? To me that's egregious. I don't see how you justify it."



Written by [Alias](#) on August 16, 1999

The FBI's indifference regarding the "mystery boat" becomes even more inexplicable in light of the account provided by a witness identified as Lou Desyron. As previously reported in these pages (see "What Happened to TWA 800?" in our October 14, 1996 issue), Desyron told ABC News that "we saw what appeared to be a flare going straight up. As a matter of fact, *we thought it was from a boat.*" (Emphasis added.)

Prime Suspect

The July 16th *USA Today*, published on the eve of the tragedy's third anniversary, reported that Bill Clinton "was ready to strike back at Middle East terrorists if they could be linked to the explosion of TWA Flight 800," but that no strike occurred because "the FBI never made the connection." According to Associated Press correspondent Pat Milton, author of *In the Blink of an Eye: The FBI Investigation of TWA Flight 800*, one of the chief suspects was renegade Saudi terrorist financier Osama bin Laden, who is suspected of plotting the 1996 attack on Saudi Arabia's Khobar Towers barracks, which killed 19 U.S. servicemen and wounded another 250. Bin Laden has also been accused of masterminding the August 1998 bombings of the U.S. embassies in Kenya and Tanzania. And, lest it be forgotten, bin Laden has provided financial and material support to the so-called Kosovo Liberation Army, the drug-dealing Muslim/Marxist terrorists who were NATO's allies in the war on Yugoslavia.

USA Today also pointed out that "weeks before the crash [of TWA 800], Clinton had placed the United States on its highest state of alert since the 1962 Cuban missile crisis. This was because the White House had received classified intelligence reports that Iran was planning a wave of terrorist attacks against the United States." Bin Laden is tightly allied both with Iran and with anti-American elements of the Afghan Mujahadeen guerillas who were provided with Stinger missiles during the war against the Soviets.

According to James Kallstrom, the FBI's lead investigator in the TWA 800 case, the agency's "exhaustive" inquiry "left no stone unturned." Kallstrom testified before Congress that the FBI's investigation included "tracking of all air and waterborne vessels in the area at the time of the explosion followed by appropriate interviews." The sole exception to this dragnet was the mysterious vessel responsible for the enigmatic "30-knot track" — and the possible link between the air disaster and the international terrorist network.



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