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### **The NTSB - To be or not to be?**

The National Transportation Safety Board, NTSB, is rapidly approaching a survival crisis. The members of the Board [all presidential political appointees] are slated to meet in public on the 22nd and 23rd of August 2,000. Their agenda is a bomb with the fuse burning. After spending scores of millions of dollars over a four year period in a failed and dubious attempt to prove a fatally flawed theory, they will be publicly discussing for the first time since December of 1997 the still unexplained crash and loss of 230 souls aboard TWA Flight 800.

On 17 July, 1996 the aircraft went down at sea just after sundown, approximately 7.3 nautical miles off the Long Island south shore, under extremely suspicious circumstances.

For the first time in its history, the NTSB, the lead federal agency for air crash investigation, has pro-actively abandoned its congressional mandate. Along the way, NTSB chairman Hall, a Clinton appointee and the Tennessee presidential campaign finance director of Mr. Gore's 1992 presidential campaign who has no discernible technical training or even understanding of rudimentary aviation principles, has refused to allow his investigators to:

1. Personally interview witnesses,
2. Test nitrates found on critical internal fuel tank parts to determine if it was explosive residue.
3. Do the proper metal protocols to determine which fuel tank exploded first,
4. Explain why the top left wing skin exploded off the aircraft,
5. Explain why the left wing failed at its strongest point,
6. Explain why the bottom of the center wing tank is domed up [not bowed out],
7. Explain why the NTSB hasn't done the Stinger live missile firing at full 747 inboard fuel tanks recommended by the nation's best department of defense air weapons experts,
8. Explain why the right side-wall of the number two main tank is blown out [into the CWT] and now mostly missing,
9. Explain why the portion of the forward spar that comprises the forward wall of the number two main tank is also blown out and largely missing,

10. Explain why the NTSB assisted the Justice Department in hiding a witness who claims to have seen a missile strike the aircraft on the forward wall of the number two main tank,
11. Explain why the nearest radar, Islip's ASR-8, clearly shows the aftermath of a missile hit [passing through the aircraft from left (wing) to right side]. Explain the formation of a separate and distinct missile debris field on radar 2.8 nautical miles to the southwest of the main crash site. I had predicted (in a Wall Street Journal letter to the editor April 24, 1997) the existence of this very debris field. Ironically, Air Force missile experts had made exactly the same prediction to FBI agents in late 1996.
12. Explain why the covert search for missile parts was suddenly shut down six days after my letter appeared in the wall street journal when the captains of the contracted boats expected the operation to continue for at least another six months. .
13. Explain why neither the Justice Department nor the NTSB is concerned with numerous unidentified surface radar contacts that were within missile range of Flight 800 when it exploded.

The only hearing the Chairman of the NTSB has allowed to date was the one in December 1997, the minimum requirement mandated by law. That so-called public hearing, was turned into a showcase for administration spin. Only the NTSB's weakly contrived theory of a spontaneous explosion of the aviation kerosene in the Boeing 747's center wing tank was considered. The hundreds of eyewitnesses who saw a streak of light intersect the aircraft were banned, along with any discussion of other theories.

The fact that such an event is literally impossible because of the extremely low volatility of aviation kerosene and the superb ignition free design of the 747 fuel tank system didn't faze these intrepid presidential political appointees. It is also a theory that is openly mocked by senior military aviators, airline captains and outside air crash investigators

After spending millions on the investigation without one shred of physical proof, Mr. Hall is still narrowly focused on making the Boeing Corporation the deep-pocket scapegoat of one of the nation's worst air tragedies. When all the facts are considered, it will become clear the aircraft was shot down. The fact that this severe breach of national security happened only fifteen weeks before the 1996 presidential election and 3 days before the opening ceremony of the Atlanta Olympics, of course, had nothing to do with determining this was an accident. If successful they will have deflected criticism of politicians and agencies in the administration that had advance warning of a probable missile attack and failed to act.

At the urging of Deputy Director of the FBI, James Kallstrom, in a letter to the NTSB immediately before the 1997 public hearing, none of the 755 witnesses interviewed by special agents were allowed to speak. Indeed, the word witness was not even used in the entire week of the hearing for fear that the media might give credibility to what these people observed.

Mr. Kallstrom , in charge of the FBI investigation, consulted directly and sometimes in person with the president and White House staff throughout. At the same time he was bullying or ignoring his own investigators and Department of Defense missile experts. In fact, when Mr. Richard Bott provided a D.O.D. report to Mr. Kallstrom in October of 1997 recommending the firing of specific missile weapons systems at 747 full fuel tanks, the deputy director summarily

shut down the FBI investigation three weeks later without taking any action. Furthermore, by placing the criminal investigation in a “pending-inactive status” he was able to hide all of the witness testimony from legitimate air crash investigators and department of defense investigators for years. He is now in FBI retirement, consulting for CBS and enjoying a far more lucrative private sector security position.

Mr. Kallstrom and Mr. Hall’s fear of eyewitnesses was, and still is, more than justified. Hundreds of the witnesses described a portion or all of the flight profile of a shoulder fired missile with a few precisely describing an impact on the aircraft’s left wing root.

These witnesses were, in fact, so credible, that within three days of the event field agents from Suffolk County Police Department (Deputy Inspector Douglas S. Matulewich), and special agents of the FBI (Special Agent Stephen Bongardt) were beginning to realize these witnesses were pointing to more than one missile firing position at sea, and in close proximity to Flight 800’s surface track.

By using global positioning satellite [GPS] portable equipment coupled with a hand-bearing compass, these aggressive investigators were able to more precisely determine two distinct firing positions, both of which were in range of Flight 800 when it exploded had shoulder fired missiles been launched from small boats. Both investigators sent precise memoranda describing these positions up their chains of command.

Approximately ten months later, acting as the chief air crash investigator for the Associated Retired Aviation Professionals [ARAP] and without foreknowledge, I inadvertently duplicated the efforts of the Suffolk County Marine Police and the FBI. Using the same type of GPS equipment and hand-bearing compass with a different mix of eyewitnesses, I came to the same conclusion that the aircraft had been fired on from two surface positions at sea. ARAP documented these conclusions in an interim report sent to the United States Congress in July of 1998.

Responding to SA Bongardt’s investigation in the late summer and fall of 1996, the administration launched a two-pronged search program. A side scan sonar search for underwater missile artifacts was immediately initiated and the urgent precedence (probably from the White House) of this effort appears to have slowed down the initial effort at recovering aircraft debris and even victims bodies.

Immediately following the presidential election in November of 1996, a much more visible and more politically risky effort began. The administration, using Chairman Hall of the NTSB to pay for it; contracted through the navy supervisor of salvage, a total of five commercial fishing dredges to secretly recover specific stinger missile parts.

Two sets of the best military satellite navigation equipment was installed aboard each civilian boat, and a non stop, 24 hour a day, four boat dredging operation began with two man teams of FBI agents as well as satellite navigation technicians embarked aboard.

A complex dredging plan was developed for 360 degrees around the initial explosion point of Flight 800. The intent was to dredge every inch of the ocean bottom out to a radius of 2.7 nautical miles to recover missile components. That was the maximum range of a Stinger missile engagement versus a Boeing 747 at flight 800's altitude. The best Air force missile guidance experts, utilizing their computers based in Dayton Ohio, had provided this vital data to the FBI on Special Agent Bongardt's request. Less than 1/4 of this huge area had any chance of containing aircraft debris. They were looking for missile parts.

When FBI agents first embarked aboard the fishing vessels in early November 1996, immediately after Clinton/Gore were safely reelected, they brought drawings of Stinger missile parts in the manual provided to them by the New York office. Agents first going aboard the contract fishing vessel ALPHA OMEGA, discovered that its crew had already recovered and then discarded back overboard as worthless junk, a missile ejector can (the first stage of a shoulder fired missile). This happened on or about October 4, 1996 while fishing very near Flight 800's explosion point, but outside the aircraft debris search area.

Chairman Hall of the NTSB, provided false cover for this covert administration operation by spinning the press into believing the six month operation was designed to find a missing scavenge pump from the aircraft center wing tank. Unfortunately for Mr. Hall, investigators working with us from inside several agencies were able to determine that the so-called missing CWT scavenge pump had been recovered still mounted on its proper bulkhead and it went missing only after someone unbolted and walked away with it. Furthermore, internal NTSB working documents generated early in the search process and now in my possession (posted at twa800.com) clearly state that pump was found before the dredging operation began.

Knowing that I would be a potentially hostile witness to the NTSB, Chairman Duncan of the House Aviation Subcommittee invited me to testify, May 6, 1999 in hearings he was conducting into the continuation of NTSB out-year funding. My testimony recommended, based the NTSB's failed investigation of Flight 800, and in the presence of Chairman Hall, that he and other political appointees in the NTSB be fired for cause, and the NTSB be reorganized and manned solely by civilian and military aviation professionals.

During that testimony, I also pointed out, if the NTSB attempted to close the investigation without first doing all the necessary testing, I would consider that evidence of criminal malfeasance. I still do. These tests should include, at a minimum; (a) proper metal examination protocols to determine which fuel tank exploded first and (b) shoulder fired missile testing against a 747 as recommended by Department of Defense missile expert, Richard Bott,

It would behoove everyone in this country to carefully listen to the statements of ARAP'S senior military member: "It's clear and there is no doubt this aircraft was shot down. It's time for the media to get off their backsides and for congress to hold hearings and take action." Condensed from the remarks of Admiral Thomas Moorer, legendary Naval Aviator, holder of the Silver Star and a distinguished former Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, the nation's highest military office.

So question remains. Is the NTSB, to be or not to be? Will the NTSB have the political will to present the eyewitness testimony at the August hearings or is it just another abused federal agency on the list of those politicized for the benefit of politicians in the administration? Does the United States Congress have the will to hold hearings that this investigator (as well as airline captains, civilian air crash investigators, and flag and general officers representing the best in military aviation from three services) believe will reveal that the truth about the loss of TWA Flight 800 was deliberately withheld from the American public.

Sincerely,

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