

For Immediate Release
Amherst, Massachusetts, July 17, 2004

Sephton V. FBI: A Freedom of Information Lawsuit to obtain withheld forensic facts and data regarding TWA Flight 800

Court Hearing scheduled:
Thursday, **July 22, 2004**
at 2:30 PM
in Court Room #2
Springfield Federal District Court,
Federal Building, 1550 Main Street, Springfield, MA
before Judge Michael Ponsor

Next week there will be a hearing to resolve a 4 year litigation effort on behalf of relatives of the victims of Flight 800, aviation professionals and various independent researchers. The lawsuit is an attempt to obtain a credible response from the FBI regarding their forensic analysis of critical evidence from the explosion of TWA Flight 800 in July 1996.

During the autopsies of the 230 victims, the FBI took hundreds of foreign objects (including numerous unidentifiable “metal fragments”, “pellets” and “metal particles”) to do lab analysis and identification. In 1998 Graeme Sephton, a professional electrical engineer at the University of Massachusetts, Amherst made a request under the Freedom of Information law to obtain the results of that intensive forensic effort. Court records now show that none of that forensic analysis was ever shared with other parties in the official investigation.

Over the last six years the FBI has not been able to do a credible search required under the law nor to find any of the requested forensic details whatsoever. Now, 8 years after the tragedy, there are recent remarkable and totally implausible assertions being made by the FBI.

Just last month, under pressure from an adverse Boston Federal Appeals Court ruling in the case, the FBI finally searched the FBI Laboratory computer database and paper records, and submitted a sworn declaration to the court. In that declaration Gregory Carl, a Unit Chief in the Explosives Unit of the FBI Laboratory Division, swore that the search found not one shred of forensic information about those hundreds of still unidentified objects. No chemical analyses, no physical descriptions, no identifications of pellets, no test results for explosive residues. The declaration offered no explanation of how the forensic details in their otherwise very reliable computer archive could have disappeared without a trace.

This newest FBI assertion in the case will now be evaluated by Judge Michael Ponsor of the Federal District Court in Springfield, Massachusetts. Details of the court filings can be seen at:

www.foiac.org www.flight800.org and www.twa800.com

In 1997 the CIA manufactured an animation, which was vigorously promoted by the FBI to explain the numerous missile descriptions from witnesses. It showed a flaming and noseless jumbo jet ascending thousands of feet; and with that impossible aerodynamic ascent, TWA 800 soared off into myth.

Retired airline pilot and aeronautical engineer Ray Lahr has also spent many years in FOI litigation seeking any credible government calculation or research that the CIA, FBI or NTSB based their critical theory upon. Was it a rigorous and scientific explanation of the eyewitness data or mere fantasy? See: <http://raylahr.entryhost.com/>

Ultimately the government spent almost \$100 million on the investigation but could not find the cause of their preferred theory; a spontaneously exploding fuel tank.

But a much greater price tag for our society as a whole is the intangible cost of a non-credible or incompetent investigation. For many people it feeds a profound sense of loss of faith and trust and security. A concern that something is seriously awry. The hundreds of hits that a Google search on “TWA 800 skepticism” speaks to this ongoing fascination and torment that this dark mystery ferments and attracts.

And there are many who have looked very closely at the details of this investigation who now believe that had TWA 800 been more thoroughly investigated, that aviation security would have been much more reliable on Sept 11, 2001. It is time for the media to demand a full disclosure of the evidence (or lack of it) and to determine how the official investigation became a disaster in its own right.

Immediately after the hearing next week, relatives of the victims, independent researchers, attorneys and parties to the two litigations mentioned here, will be available to answer questions in the plaza outside the courthouse.

Contact:

Graeme Sephton,
President of FOIAC
(413) 367-2253
email: graeme@foiac.org
sephton@admin.umass.edu