

TWA 800 crash: an act of war against the United States?

by Jeffrey Steinberg

With the recovery of the “black box” flight recorders from TWA flight 800, the Clinton administration is moving closer to the conclusion that the July 14 downing of the Boeing 747 over Long Island, New York, killing 230 civilians, was an act of terrorism. Up until now, the White House, as well as senior federal law enforcement officials, have cautiously refrained from labeling the tragedy as an act of sabotage. Instead, they have emphasized, correctly, that there are three distinct possible explanations for the mid-air explosion of the plane: a catastrophic mechanical failure (what some have called “the ValuJet syndrome,” the consequences of years of airline deregulation, “downsizing,” and other disinvestment in airline safety procedures and fleet modernization); a bomb planted onboard the plane; or a missile attack.

Evidence for a missile attack

After several days of attempting to downplay, or deny, outright, the possibility that TWA 800 was shot down from the sky by a sophisticated surface-to-air missile, FBI and U.S. Army officials eventually acknowledged that there were two “highly credible” eyewitnesses, satellite surveillance data, and other forensic evidence, suggesting that a missile attack could indeed have been behind the explosion.

Sources close to the New York Police Department, which was one of the first agencies to arrive at the crash site, and which has provided extensive manpower and technical expertise to the search and probe, told *EIR* that early forensic evidence, including autopsies of some of the bodies recovered from the ocean, did not refute the possibility of a missile attack. A surface-to-air heat-seeking missile, fired from the

beach or from a boat offshore, would have hit one of the plane’s engines, which are on the wings, below the fuel tanks. This would have caused a powerful fuel-air explosion. Eyewitnesses say that the plane burst into a fireball, a second after a smaller flash of light was seen. This would occur in the case that a heat-seeking missile hit the plane. A similar effect, the sources added, would have also occurred if a bomb had been planted on the wing.

According to several declassified technical publications, including *Janes Land-Based Air Defense* and *World Missiles Briefing*, there are a number of modern surface-to-air missiles, capable of hitting a 747 flying at 13-14,000 feet. These include: the French Simbad, the Swedish Bofors RBS-70, the U.S. Stinger FIM-92B, the Russian Strella, and the British Javelin and Blowpipe.

During the 1979-89 war in Afghanistan, the West delivered hundreds of shoulder-held surface-to-air missiles to the afghansi mujahideen, enabling them to defeat the Soviets’ air superiority. When the war ended, over 100 of these missiles were still in the possession of mujahideen fighters, and the CIA made an exhaustive, but only partially successful, effort to recover them, often paying ten times their original cost to purchase them from black marketeers and mujahideen leaders. Many of these U.S.-delivered Stingers are still unaccounted for. But, even beyond this missing inventory of Afghan War missiles, most major governments around the world have large inventories of such weapons, and these inventories are often accessed by black market gun and drug traffickers.

Today, as *EIR* documented in an Oct. 13, 1995 *Special*

Report, this afghansi mujahideen apparatus is at the center of international terrorism and irregular warfare, serving as a vast mercenary force-for-hire, operating on every continent. *EIR* estimates that no fewer than 2,500 well-trained afghansi mujahideen fighters are active in such terrorist gangs as Hezbollah, Islamic Jihad, the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE, or Tamil Tigers), the Algerian Armed Islamic Group (GIA), several groups plotting the overthrow of the Saudi regime and the expulsion of the U.S. military from the Persian Gulf, and the Filipino Abu Sayyaf. Ramzi Ahmed Yousef, the accused mastermind of the New York City World Trade Center bombing of February 1993, fought in Afghanistan. He is also accused of plotting bombings of American commercial airliners in Asia, and attempting to assassinate Pope John Paul II and President Clinton, during separate trips they made to the Philippines last year.

A possible strategic threat

Whether the crash of TWA 800 was the result of a bombing or a missile is, of course, of only secondary importance. If the flight was downed as the result of either form of sabotage, this represents an act of war against the United States, and demands the most serious form of response, once the authors of the attack are identified.

EIR Contributing Editor Lyndon LaRouche, in a radio interview with "EIR Talks" on July 24, was very circumspect, not casting blame for the tragedy prematurely, but pointing to the international strategic context in which the event occurred.

"This is an extremely significant event, obviously, whose significance, I think, is poorly understood by most Americans, who unfortunately must rely upon the so-called major news media for most of their information on the subject," LaRouche emphasized.

"Now, once we have or might have determined that it was not a mechanical or related failure of the craft itself, but someone's malicious interference with the life of the craft and the passengers on it, then we're dealing with something—a terrorist act of potentially strategic significance. And, we are by no means looking at possibilities of actions by Libya or Iran. Under no circumstances, would we expect that such an action would have been taken by Libya or Iran, despite what Sen. Alfonse D'Amato has said, and so forth. (Alfonse D'Amato is a man who doesn't lie all the time, but his probability of telling the truth is very small.) That would be extremely serious.

"A bomb would be very serious," LaRouche continued. "Instead of the case of using a missile—in this case, it would have to be something equivalent to a SAM-7 of some sophistication, probably launched from a boat—that would be *even more* terrifyingly strategically significant.

"Now, there are two things you can look at in the case it were a terrorist action, in order to see where we should go,

what we should be prepared for. I'm not suggesting that this is the case, but what we have to be prepared for, in case it turns out not to be some defect in the craft itself—defect of wear, age, or maintenance. In that case, we're looking at something beyond ordinary terrorism; we're looking at a strategic threat. If a missile: This is really first-rate strategic effect. It's not a terrorist effect in the ordinary sense. If it's a bomb, it's *still* something of that sort.

"Now, the suspects: We should not look so much for the carrier. The ordinary person doesn't understand how terrorism works, particularly so-called irregular warfare in the age of sub-nuclear conflict. We don't look for the messenger. It's important to look for the messengers, the delivery boys, so to speak, but that doesn't answer your problem. You have to look for the guy who hired or retained the services of the delivery boy. And, this has to be a major player—not Iran, not Libya.

"I have some very good ideas about who such a perpetrator would be—not the delivery boy—particularly in the case it were a missile. I'm not going to say at this time, but I have a very clear conception of the strategic overview, of the guy who might have hired or organized this event, as opposed to the delivery boy. And, I'm prepared to say what has to be said, at the appropriate time."

Warfare by the British/Club of the Isles

While it is appropriate to avoid prematurely foisting blame for the crash of TWA 800, there are crucial background facts that should already be prominently under consideration by the White House and the national security agencies charged with investigating this potential heinous crime.

First among these facts is the preponderance of evidence, provided by governments all around the world, that London is the center of world terrorism today. By London, we do not necessarily mean the British government of Prime Minister John Major. As *EIR* documented in a recent *Special Report*, "The Sun Never Sets on the New British Empire," London is the center of a worldwide financier oligarchy, associated with the apparatus of the British Crown and the British Commonwealth, but more broadly tied to a network of 3-5,000 prominent bankers, intelligence officials, corporate directors, and others. This apparatus is often referred to as the Club of the Isles.

Through the British monarchy's Privy Council, England has been turned into a safehouse for the afghansi mujahideen apparatus, in its various forms. This is not a matter of speculation. Since August 1995, a number of governments have lodged formal protests with the Major government, over British protection and bankrolling of terrorist groups.

• In August 1995, Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto of Pakistan called for the British government to extradite Altaf Hussein, the leader of Mohajir Qaum Movement, an afghansi-linked terrorist group responsible for a string of bombings

and assassinations in Karachi. "When Altaf sits in London and he gives a call for a strike in Karachi and his militants enforce that strike and kill 30 innocent people a day, I think the British government has a moral responsibility to restrain him," Bhutto wrote to Major. The British government declined to honor the extradition request, claiming there was no "proof" that Altaf Hussein was involved in the terrorism in Pakistan.

- On Nov. 3, 1995, the French daily *Le Monde* wrote about the bombing spree by the Algerian GIA: "The track of Boualem Gensaid, GIA leader in Paris, leads to Great Britain. Britain has served as logistical and financial base for the terrorists. . . . Great Britain transformed itself into a formidable network of fundraising aimed at financing the guerrillas in the Algerian *maquis*." The next day, *Le Parisien* reported that the author of the GIA terror attack inside France was former Afghan mujihedeem leader Abou Farres, who was given a residence visa in London, despite the fact that he was already wanted in connection with the bombing of the Algiers Airport.

- On Nov. 24, 1995, the Egyptian government weighed in against Britain, when the interior minister publicly accused the British government of "harboring Islamic terrorists" implicated in the Nov. 19 car-bombing of the Egyptian embassy in Pakistan. According to British news accounts, Egyptian police raids on a terrorist base had turned up "details of bank transfers from London to finance terrorist operations planned by terrorist leaders living in Britain."

- On March 4, 1996—after a powerful bomb blew up in a central market in Jerusalem, killing a dozen people, and a second bomb exploded in Tel Aviv—the British *Express* reported:

"As the the bomb exploded in Tel Aviv, Israel's ambassador was meeting British Foreign Minister Malcolm Rifkind to ask for Britain's help in beating Hamas. Israeli security sources say the fanatics behind the bombings are funded and controlled through secret cells operating here. Only days before the latest terror campaign began, military chiefs in Jerusalem detailed how Islamic groups raised £7 million in donations from British organizations. The ambassador, Moshe Raviv, yesterday shared Israel's latest information about the Hamas operations. A source at the Israeli embassy said last night, 'It is not the first time we have pointed out that Islamic terrorists are in Britain.'"

The British government's response? The Foreign Office officially informed the Israeli ambassador: "We have seen no proof to support allegations that funds raised by the Hamas in the U.K. are used directly in support of terrorist acts elsewhere."

Later in the spring, when President Clinton convened an emergency heads of state summit at Sharm el-Sheikh, Egypt to tackle the problem of terrorism, the Israeli government again raised the issue of British support for terrorist

commanders. This time, the British government denied that Israel had ever provided documentation of the London terror links. The Israelis furiously responded, saying that they would deliver a formal dossier on the massive British support—including government financial subsidies—for terrorists.

President Clinton's Achilles' heel

President Clinton is well aware that the guns of London have been aimed at his head, from almost the first day he entered office. Following the 1993 World Trade Center bombing, and, again, following the 1995 Oklahoma City bombing, leading British parliamentarians from the ruling Tory Party publicly gloated over the fact that the U.S. President was on the receiving end of irregular warfare. According to the London *Guardian* of April 21, 1995, immediately after the Oklahoma City bombing, Tory MP David Wiltshire wrote to the U.S. ambassador to the Court of St. James: "I would suggest that one consequence of your tragedy ought to be the rethinking of your government's fêting of apologists for terrorism in Northern Ireland," a reference to President Clinton's granting of a travel visa to Sinn Fein President Gerry Adams. Another Tory MP, according to the *Guardian*, gushed that the terrorism in Oklahoma "had taught the Americans a lesson."

Despite this visceral hostility toward the U.S. President from senior British officials, and despite the evidence, cited above, of London's role as the center of world terrorism today, the U.S. State Department has publicly refused to even consider the "British factor" in international terrorism.

Immediately after the Sharm el-Sheikh summit, State Department spokesman Nick Burns, in response to a question about British involvement in terrorism from *EIR* correspondent William Jones, replied: "I would not single out the United Kingdom in determining how we can foreclose terrorist options for Hamas in the future. I wouldn't single out the United Kingdom. I would single out Iran. . . . I simply don't know if this particular subject has been raised diplomatically by the United States with the United Kingdom. But again, I would argue very strongly that singling out the United Kingdom would be most curious now."

Indeed, so far, the Clinton administration has not broken from the Thatcher-Bush era coverup of the actual sponsorship of world terrorism, even when British control is not at issue. There continues to be a coverup of the role of the Syrian regime of Hafez al-Assad in the December 1988 bombing of Pan Am Flight 103, which crashed over Lockerbie, Scotland, killing a total of 270 people.

So far, the Clinton White House has been wise to avoid jumping to any conclusions about the TWA 800 tragedy. Soon enough, compelling evidence will be gathered on the authorship of the crash. At that point, the truth must be told—regardless of who stands exposed.