

FACTUAL ERRORS IN *CNN PRESENTS: NO SURVIVORS*

The CNN *No Survivors* program on the crash of TWA Flight 800 presented invalid analyses and misleading information in support of the government's theory while dismissing and ignoring real evidence pointing to other reasons for the jetliner's demise.

CNN Crash Sequence Animation

CNN's animation of the jetliner flying onward and upward after it exploded conflicts with the hard evidence provided by the many radar sites that recorded the crash. The radar sites show Flight 800's ground speed increasing immediately after losing electrical power. This acceleration indicates that Flight 800 descended immediately after exploding. Gravity accelerated the jetliner as it went down, just as a bicyclist increases speed going down hills.

This means that the climb shown in CNN's animation and in government simulations are invalid. Indeed, every government simulation and animation released to date conflicts with the radar data at precisely the point when Flight 800 is alleged to have climbed. Independently run simulations showing that Flight 800 descended immediately, fit with the radar data.

So why show Flight 800 climbing? The government used the climb to explain the accounts of nearly 200 eyewitnesses who reported seeing a rising streak of light or flare before the crash. Without the climb, the government's theory does not account for the rising flare. CNN's animation, which also includes a fictitious climb, is in stark contrast to the hard data.

The Flight 800 Independent Researchers Organization [FIRO] publicly reported the large discrepancies between the radar data and government flight simulations in an August 1999 press conference in Washington DC that C-Span covered. FIRO's findings were based on the official radar-recorded trajectory of the aircraft. After the FIRO press conference, the NTSB conducted several more simulations, none of which matched the radar data. To date, no simulation done by the NTSB matches the radar data.

If the NTSB admitted that Flight 800 did not climb—which is what the hard evidence or radar data shows—it would not be able to explain why hundreds of eyewitness reported seeing a rising streak of light moments before the crash. So, the NTSB has stuck with the climb scenario and maintained that the rising streak seen by so many was the aircraft itself. Again, the hard data—the radar evidence—shows otherwise.

NTSB Chairman Hall addressed the data that showed Flight 800 did not climb during the final hearing on TWA Flight 800 in August 2000. Hall asked Witness Group Chairman Dr David Mayer: "Now, if you could show that the airplane did not climb after the nose departed, will that change your analysis?" Mayer responded, "No sir..."

Essentially, when Hall asked Mayer if he would change his conclusion if the evidence

indicated that a different scenario was valid, Mayer told him that he would not. This is, quite simply, scientifically dishonest.

The Missile Theory

No Survivors producer David Mattingly used the government's flawed reasoning to dismiss the missile theory. The government, through Mattingly's leading questions, said that there was no evidence of a missile anywhere on the plane. However, according to the NTSB's own lead TWA 800 investigator, former Aviation Safety Director Dr. Bernard Loeb, the localized recrystallization of metal on the center wing tank could have been caused by a missile. Indeed, the NTSB did not rule out a missile as the cause of that damage, according to Loeb. Was Mr. Mattingly aware of Dr. Loeb's conclusion?

In *No Survivors* and in government reports, attention was drawn to small shoulder-fired missiles. Mattingly assumes that since there was no evidence of damage from these small missiles that there was no evidence of any kind of missile. Mattingly's statement, "Missiles leave pockmarks on metal" is misleading because it is out of context. He should have said that small, shoulder-launched missiles leave pockmarks. And the segment should have made it clear to the audience that only this small type of missile was being considered and could be ruled out. A key question Mattingly could have asked was: Could other types of missiles have caused this kind of damage? By failing to ask that question, Mattingly fell for the "look here, not there" ploy.

The truth is that the pockmarks are caused by extremely hot gases and material ejected from a small warhead that is very close to the aircraft when exploding. Many types of larger missiles explode much further away from the aircraft and leave different types of damage signatures—signatures that were in fact present in the Flight 800 wreckage. Even lead TWA 800 investigator Dr. Loeb has not ruled out a large missile as the cause of these signatures.

So the sequence where Mattingly holds up wreckage from a government test involving a small, shoulder-fired missile and asks an NTSB investigator if damage like that occurred anywhere on the aircraft illustrates how improper and incomplete research leads to bad reporting. When the investigator answers "no" to Mattingly's questions, viewers are left believing that there was no damage to the aircraft consistent with *any* type of missile. This is incorrect.

Eyewitnesses

CNN interviewed Naneen Levine, who drew a picture of what she saw in front of CNN's cameras: a red dot of light heading nearly straight up and arcing to the right before exploding at Flight 800's position. Naneen's account is consistent with hundreds of other witnesses, and her description of the red dot's trajectory is completely *inconsistent* with any stage of Flight 800's break up.

The dot went straight up and curved to the right. Flight 800 went to the left and curved downward. CNN did not address this discrepancy, but left discredited government

officials to explain that what Levine saw was most likely the plane on fire. This is clearly impossible considering Flight 800's initial trajectory, the radar data, and the debris field locations. CNN's *No Survivors* producers apparently were not aware of these discrepancies and did not ask government officials about them.

CNN interviewed two airborne eyewitnesses who saw Flight 800 explode but did not report seeing a missile. CNN chose not to interview the two Air National Guard pilots, Captain Chris Baur and Major Fred Meyer, also airborne witnesses, who were the first to arrive at the crash site. Baur and Meyer described seeing a missile or some flying pyrotechnic device either collide with or explode into Flight 800. Major Meyer flew over-land rescues in Vietnam and has seen missiles before. He is certain what he saw was a missile and that the subsequent explosion was military ordinance. Why didn't CNN interview these witnesses or attempt to explain their accounts?

Smoking Gun Evidence Neglected

Just as egregious as the misleading and incorrect information CNN presented, was the information it neglected.

Immediately after Flight 800 exploded, wreckage was blown out the right side of the plane at *apparent super-sonic speeds*. Radar data shows that this wreckage was hurled out about one-quarter of a mile from where the jetliner exploded and at an average speed of 500 mph. Given the incredible force of air resistance, this wreckage most likely exited the airframe at a supersonic speed. It traveled nearly perpendicular to the flight path, continuing on before splashing down about one-half mile south of Flight 800's easterly track.

The Navy found it during salvage operations and marked it "Recovered (Confirmed)" in their salvage report, but for some reason, this wreckage was never entered into the NTSB's debris field database. There are, obviously, important questions to be asked about this debris, the speed with which it left the jetliner and why it was never entered into the NTSB's debris field database.

This piece of wreckage could not fit in the official theory. Officially and according to NSTB Sequence Group Chairman James Wildey, nothing exited Flight 800's airframe at subsonic, never mind supersonic speeds at that time. However, the radar data showing this wreckage and the Navy's recovery location *completely contradict Wildey's claim*.

On the other hand, this wreckage is consistent with witness reports of a southbound missile before the crash. It is unlikely that radar would pick up the smooth, rounded surfaces of an unexploded missile. Radar could, however detect jagged missile parts after detonation. Also, any pieces of Flight 800's airframe that may have been ejected as a result of the detonation would contain adequate reflective surfaces to be picked up. This is precisely what the radar information shows: high-speed wreckage and/or missile parts exiting on a very fast, southerly trajectory just after the initial explosion.

The government has no explanation for this radar data or the Navy's recovery location.

And it is presently not listed in the official debris field database. This wreckage would not have been ignored in a responsible report on TWA 800's demise.

Summary

The *No Survivors* documentary was poorly researched and inadequately fact-checked. The above lists just a few areas of reporting in the show that were erroneous and misleading. The radar, debris field, forensic, and eyewitness evidence is compelling and consistent. It fits well into a theory involving a missile, while contradicting the government's theory. CNN's producers relied on discredited government sources and invalid data to present a program that is seriously flawed and full of misinformation about one of our nation's worst air disasters. CNN could do better. The American public deserves better.

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