

TRAGEDY IN PENNSYLVANIA

TERROR HITS HOME



AP PHOTO

Inspectors walk around the wreckage of a United Airlines plane in a field near Shanksville, Pa. The jetliner carrying 45 people crashed Tuesday morning, moments after a man who said he was a passenger told an emergency dispatcher in a cell phone call: "We are being hijacked; we are being hijacked!"

Plunge into Pennsylvania field is fourth and last crash of day

Camp David was intended target of attack

By Todd Spangler
Associated Press writer

SHANKSVILLE, PA. — A passenger on United Airlines Flight 93 called on his cell phone from a locked bathroom and delivered a chilling message: "We are being hijacked; we are being hijacked!" Minutes later, the jetliner crashed in western Pennsylvania with 45 people aboard, the last of four closely timed terror attacks across the country.

Radar showed the San Francisco-bound Boeing 757 from Newark, N.J., had almost reached Cleveland when it made a sharp left turn and headed back to Pennsylvania, crashing in a grassy field edged by woods about 80 miles southeast of Pittsburgh. There was no sign of any survivors.

"There's a crater gouged in the earth. The plane is pretty much disintegrated. There's nothing left but scorched trees," said Mark Stahl of Somerset, Pa., who went to the scene.

The Boeing 757 crash was one of four reported Tuesday by

United and American airlines. Two jetliners crashed into the World Trade Center in New York City, and one hit the Pentagon in Washington.

A Virginia congressman said Flight 93's intended target was apparently Camp David, the presidential retreat in the mountains of Maryland, about 85 miles southeast of the crash site.

United said Flight 93 left Newark at 8:01 a.m. with 38 passengers, two pilots and five flight attendants.

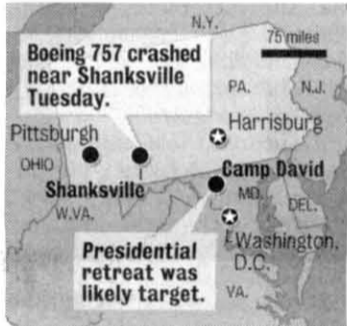
Minutes before the 10 a.m. crash, an emergency dispatcher in Pennsylvania received a cell phone call from a man who said he was a passenger locked in a bathroom aboard the plane. The man repeatedly said the call was not a hoax, said dispatch supervisor Glenn Cramer in neighboring Westmoreland County.

"We are being hijacked; we are being hijacked!" Cramer quoted the man from a transcript of the call.

The man told dispatchers the plane "was going down. He heard some sort of explosion and saw white smoke coming from the plane, and we lost contact with him," Cramer said.

FBI agent Wells-Morrison wouldn't confirm that the plane was hijacked but said the FBI was reviewing the tape of the 911 call.

"At this point, we're not pre-



AP MAP

pared to say it was an act of terrorism, though it appears to be that," Morrison said.

Rep. James Moran, D-Va., said after a Marine Corps briefing in Washington that Flight 93 was apparently intended for Camp David.

Reporters were taken to the top of a hill overlooking the scene. The crash left a V-shaped gouge in a grassy field surrounded by thick woods, just below a hilltop strip mine. The gouge is 8 to 10 feet deep and 15 to 20 feet long, said Capt. Frank Monaco of the Pennsylvania State Police.

Investigators believe the plane crashed there and disintegrated, sending debris into trees nearby, Monaco said.

"There's nothing in the ground you can see," Monaco said of the crash site. "It just looks like tiny pieces of debris."

Michael Merringer was on a mountain bike ride with his wife, Amy, about two miles from the crash site.

"I heard the engine gun two different times, and then I heard a loud bang, and the windows of the houses all around rattled," Merringer said. "I looked up, and I saw the smoke coming up."

The couple rushed home and drove near the scene.

"Everything was on fire, and there was trees knocked down, and there was a big hole in the ground," he said.

In Chicago, United CEO James Goodwin said the airline was sending a team to Pennsylvania to assist in the investigation and to help family members.

"Today's events are a tragedy, and our prayers are with everyone at this time," Goodwin said.

Without citing a death toll, United said Tuesday afternoon that it had identified all passengers and crew members on board the two planes and was notifying family members. No names were released immediately.

In Pennsylvania's Richland Township, Police Chief Jim Mock said air traffic control coordinators reported Tuesday morning that a large aircraft was heading toward John Murtha Johnstown Cambria County Municipal Airport in the township, about 60 miles east of Pittsburgh.

The air traffic controllers said the aircraft would not identify

itself, according to Mock, who is also the airport's emergency coordinator. Shortly after talking to the controllers, Mock said, a plane crashed north of the Somerset County airport about 20 miles away.

"It shook the whole station," said Bruce Grine, owner of Grine's Service Center in Shanksville, about 2½ miles from the crash. "Everybody ran outside, and by that time the fire whistle was blowing."

Stahl was listening to reports about the World Trade Center attacks on the radio when he heard Flight 93 crash. He took pictures showing a billowing cloud and a large, black hole in the ground surrounded by a small piece of the airplane on fire.

"I didn't know what to think. It was shocking," Stahl said.

At San Francisco International Airport, where the plane was headed, an evacuation was ordered. Bomb-sniffing dogs patrolled the hallways and a counseling center was set up for relatives of the people aboard Flight 93.

"This is a time for compassion. It's not a time for long sermons," said the Rev. John Delariva, a Catholic priest who is part of the airport's counseling team.

Flight 93 also operated as a code-share flight with Air Canada as Flight AC4085.

Networks stay steady amid the turmoil

By Dave Walker
Television columnist

The enormity of the TV networks' coverage task Tuesday seemed to grow with every replay of United 175's crash into the World Trade Center, and the pictures outweighed any individual performance.

As CBS anchorman Dan Rather said early on, "The word of the day is 'steady.'"

Then he said it again, as much for himself as for his viewers, many of whom were just tuning in to the terrible story.

"Steady." America was under attack, simple and sad as that, and the story disrupted the TV dial as nothing had since the bombing of Baghdad and the O.J. Simpson verdict.

The Food Network and HGTV suspended programming entirely, as did the shopping network QVC.

MTV, VH1 and TNN ceased music and entertainment programming to carry coverage by CBS, the flagship broadcast network of their Viacom corporate umbrella. (Nickelodeon and TV Land, other networks under the same umbrella, stuck with typical kid-targeted or escapist fare.)

Meanwhile, the array of Fox networks, including FX and Fox Sports, dropped everything to carry Fox News' signal.

We'll never forget the images that cascaded from one network to another during the day and into the night.

That plane crash, for example, seemed to grow more grotesque with each new camera angle.

"If you didn't know this was real (you'd think) it must be a horror movie," Rather said. "It is horrible (but) it's not from a movie."

After just a comparative few replays of the crash, ABC's Peter Jennings seemed prematurely apologetic.

"I know on occasion we run the images of it to the point of offensiveness," he said of the crash. "I hope we're not there."

They weren't far, but the apologies continued.

"It is inevitable that some of the first reports will be wrong," said Rather, correctly.

One (fuzzy) early report linked the strikes to an anniversary of the Camp David accords. There were (incorrect) reports of explosions at the Capitol and the State Department. There were missing international flights headed nobody knew where.

But still, the good, heroic work far outweighed the rest.

As dust-covered correspondents and camera crews made their way back to the network studios, viewers began to experience the World Trade Center's collapse from ground level.

CNN had one amazing piece of footage, a bumpy hand-held sequence that began at the base of one of the collapsing towers.

The cameraman aimed his lens toward the building just as it began to crumble. With concrete and steel raining down, he began to run — but kept rolling, and his camera captured the street scene behind him as he fled.

The background filled with dust, as here and there the camera caught glimpses of other terrified New Yorkers running for their lives.

Every few seconds, the cameraman's shadow jumped into the frame.

During NBC's coverage of the tragedy, anchor Tom Brokaw called the towers "two colossal icons of the American capitalist system."

Trying to describe the "incredible, indelible scene," around the tip of Manhattan, Rather referenced another American icon.

"There's smoke in the nostrils of the Statue of Liberty," he said.

Steady, Dan.

TV columnist Dave Walker can be reached at dwalker@timespicayune.com or (504) 826-3429.

Threatened America has unprecedented shutdown

By Tom Gorman
©2001, Los Angeles Times

Much of America shut down.

From the White House and virtually every other federal building in the country, to Seattle's Space Needle and the Walt Disney amusement parks, government centers, office buildings and tourist attractions all closed Tuesday because they were possible terrorism targets.

There was no Major League Baseball, no stock market.

Shopping malls in the Midwest, law offices in the South, banks in the West, oil company headquarters in Houston and car manufacturers in Michigan — all closed.

Beyond just the airports, transit was severely hampered: Police in Houston closed a section of freeway after a truck, suspected of carrying explosives, was stopped traveling the

wrong direction, only to find it was carrying furniture. Most ferries in Washington state were closed to vehicular traffic, for fear of car bombs. Greyhound and Amtrak suspended all service in the Northeast; the U.S. section of the St. Lawrence Seaway was closed, and tunnels between Detroit and Windsor, Canada, were closed to car traffic. Car rental agencies near airports were deluged.

It was as if a wholly unnerved America, frozen in the headlights, braced for what might happen next and went home — for safety and to watch television — or to blood donation centers, or to churches.

State government offices that remained opened for public business — as was the case in Nevada and Oklahoma — were the exception, not the rule. In Boston, Massachusetts Acting Gov. Jane Swift retreated to an emergency command bunker. In

Atlanta, the Georgia General Assembly stood and sang, "God Bless America" before leaving the building.

Workers poured out of the nation's tallest office buildings as commerce ground to a halt — from the 110-story Sears Tower and 100-story John Hancock Center in Chicago to Boston's Prudential Center, to the IDS Center in Minneapolis and the World Trade Center in St. Paul, to the Peachtree Center in Atlanta and the Bank of America Tower in Seattle.

In Florida — where President Bush was visiting when the calamity unfolded — closures swept from the state's parks, libraries and shopping malls to its 11 universities.

The president's brother, Gov. Jeb Bush, declared a state of emergency and ordered the evacuation of the high-rise Capitol building "to ensure that we are prepared for any eventual-

ity."

The Kennedy Space Center, the country's chief spaceport, was placed under a "Threatcon Delta" condition, the highest of four states of emergency. Buildings were locked, tourists turned away and security patrols beefed up while 12,000 workers were sent home.

"We've had no indication of an imminent threat to the Kennedy Space Center," NASA spokesman Joel Wells said. "But we are taking these incidents very seriously."

High above, the commander of the International Space Station, Frank Culbertson, reported he could see the smoke hovering over Manhattan.

The nation's largest shopping malls — from the Mall of America in Minnesota to the Lenox Mall in Atlanta — closed. Even in malls that remained opened, stores with New York headquarters closed individually. Seattle-

based Starbucks Corp. also shut its 2,900 stores nationwide.

Elsewhere in Atlanta, employees were sent home from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and Coca-Cola's international headquarters.

Extra elevated and commuter trains were dispatched into downtown Chicago to help workers make their way home, even as police guarded entrances to the maze of subterranean streets and tunnels that run beneath the city's financial district, the Loop.

Authorities in Chicago used concrete blocks and heavy trucks to barricade the entrances to power plants and pumping facilities, and many of the city's main tourist attractions were closed.

Authorities in Oklahoma City closed downtown streets, creating such gridlock that workers were advised they may not reach home until after nightfall.