

FLIGHT 93: “LET’S ROLL!”

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There is an impressive body of evidence that, on 9/11, United Flight 93 that crashed in a field in Pennsylvania was shot down by a U.S. military fighter in spite of official denial. It has been speculated that, when its flight path headed back to Washington, decisive action was taken. Here is a summary of the evidence:

1. The official version of the destruction of Flight 93 is that it descended sharply, flipped over at the last instant, and ploughed into the ground at a steep angle. Large planes that nosedive into the ground at a steep angle leave a crater at the point of impact and throw debris several hundred feet in all directions. In the case of Flight 93, there *was* a crater and there *was* a field of debris extending several hundred feet. However, there also was debris scattered over a much larger area. A one-ton piece of engine landed 1800 feet – over a third of a *mile* – from the crash site.¹ A secondary debris field was *six miles* from the primary field. Many objects, including chunks of plastic and pieces of passenger seats were retrieved *eight miles* from the crash site on the other side of a mountain ridge. Only planes that come apart in the air create this pattern.²



¹ “Flight 92 probe involved trooper with local ties,” by Joe Pinchot, *Herald* (Sharon, Pa.) Oct. 8, 2001, <http://www.sharon-herald.com/localnews/recentnews/0110/ln100801c.html>.

² Federal authorities suggested that, even though the plane nosedived into the ground, the engine bounced 1800 feet from impact and the lighter objects were blown eight miles by the wind, which incidentally was ten miles per hour that day. That means they would need 48 minutes to travel the distance, but witnesses eight miles away saw debris falling from the sky almost immediately following the crash. See: “What Did Happen to Flight 93?” by Richard Wallace, *The Mirror*, (Britain), Sept. 12, 2002, <http://www.mirror.co.uk/news/allnews/page.cfm?objectid=12192317&method=full&siteid=50143>. Also: “Black Box from Pennsylvania crash found,” CNN, September 13, 2001, <http://archives.cnn.com/2001/US/09/13/penn.attack/>. Also: “Investigators locate black box from Flight 93,” by Tom Gibb, James O’Toole and Cindi Lash, *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*, Sept. 13, 2001, <http://post-gazette.com/headlines/20010913somersetp3.asp>.

2. At least six witnesses reported seeing a military jet fighter circling the area immediately before and after the crash. At first the government claimed there was no other aircraft in the area but later said a civilian plane had been requested to inspect the crash and report its location. Note, however, that witnesses saw the jet *before* the crash.¹ The name of the civilian pilot or the identity of the craft has never been divulged.
3. Passenger Edward Felt made an emergency 911 call from the plane and told the operator that there had been an explosion on board and that he could see white smoke. Phone contact was lost shortly after that. The tape recording of this call was confiscated by the FBI, and the operator who took the call was ordered not to discuss it. However, Felt's family members were allowed to listen to the recording (or at least part of it) and heard the comments about the explosion and smoke. They, too, were warned not to discuss the matter – on the basis that it might jeopardize the prosecution of Zacarias Moussaoui, who was to be tried for masterminding the 9/11 attacks.²
4. Staff members of the Commission to Investigate 9/11 have said that Vice President Dick Cheney – who was in personal command of the military response that morning – gave the command to shoot down Flight 93 shortly after it headed toward the Capitol. As reported by the *New York Post*:

Vice President Dick Cheney may not have had the proper authority to issue orders to shoot down commercial aircraft on Sept. 11, according to a new account of the deadly day. The account in *Vanity Fair* magazine is partly based on interviews with some staff and members of the 9/11 commission who raise doubts about whether the vice president had received the shutdown authority from President Bush before he gave the order.

On Sept. 11, Cheney at about 10:15 a.m. gave the green light to fighter aircraft to shoot down a commercial plane that seemed headed toward D.C. and which officials feared might have been hijacked and headed toward a target.³

¹ "What Did Happen to Flight 93?" *op.cit.*

² This was denied by the *New York Times* in its March 27, 2002 issue, but was confirmed by *The Washington Post* and especially *The Pittsburgh Post-Gazette* which featured a detailed report on the Felt family's experience at the FBI meeting where the tapes were played. See "Jetliner Was Diverted Toward Washington Before Crash in PA," by Charles Lane and Phillip Pan, *Washington Post*, September 12, 2001, <http://www.washingtonpost.com/ac2/wp-dyn?pagename=article&node=nation/nationalsecurity&contentId=A14327-2001Sep11>. Also "It hurt to listen," by Steve Levin, *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*, April 21, 2002, <http://www.post-gazette.com/nation/20020421flight930421p1.asp>.

³ "Doubt on 9/11 "shootdown order," by Vincent Morris, *New York Post*, Oct 5, 2004, <http://pqasb.pqarchiver.com/nypost/707460851.html?did=707460851&FMT=ABS&FMTS=FT&date=Oct+5%2C+2004&author=VINCENT+MORRIS+Post+Correspondent&pub=New+York+Post&desc=DOUBT+ON+9%2F11+%27SHOOTDOWN%27+ORDER>.

Notice the word “about.” The exact time of this order is critical, because the government claims that Flight 93 crashed at 10:03 A.M. If this is correct and if Cheney’s order was executed at 10:15, then Flight 93 had already crashed when the order was given. This, however, does not close the matter. It is reported that at least one phone call from a passenger on board abruptly ended at 10:03 and, according to the government, the time on the recovered black-box recorder also was 10:03. However, prior to the release of the 9/11 Commission Report, the time of the crash was generally accepted at 10:06, not 10:03. That is because an earth tremor had been recorded on regional seismographs at 10:06, and it was consistent with what would be expected from a large plane impact in that area. There was no tremor at 10:03 or any other time near it. Why the fuss over three minutes? Because 10:06 brings the time within only nine minutes of Cheney’s order, and it is close enough to be “about” 10:15. But then, so is 10:03.

What can we conclude from all this? While the evidence is compelling, it is not conclusive. The facts are still trickling in and, if eventually it is proved that Flight 93 *was* shot down on orders from above, it will be doubly painful in view of the legendary “let’s roll” heroism of the passengers. Of course, that still would not detract from their unquestionable heroism, nor would it mean that whoever issued the order acted improperly. In fact, most people would agree that it would have been the right thing to do. The public is dismayed at the fact that fighter jets failed to respond soon enough to prevent the attacks on the Twin Towers and the Pentagon, but what is usually not discussed in connection with this is that, if they *had* arrived in time, they would have been expected to shoot down those flights as well. Otherwise, there would be no reason for the pursuit. So why would the government cover up the facts?

At this point, one can only speculate that (1) Flight 92 was shot down on orders from either the White House or the Pentagon; (2) it was the right thing to do under the circumstances; and (3) the Administration lied about it because of possible political backlash. The passengers rightfully had achieved hero status in the eyes of the public, and the fact that the plane never made it to Washington for an attack on the Capitol



Todd Beamer
“Let’s roll!”

Building or the White House had been attributed to their courageous and decisive action. The oft-repeated phrase “Let’s roll!” shouted by passenger Todd Beamer as he led a desperate charge of passengers against the hijackers became the battle cry of an outraged America determined to fight back. It would have been politically unthinkable to tamper with that image, especially if doing so required having to acknowledge that these brave Americans had been killed by their own military. As is often the case with government, appearances are more important than reality.¹

¹ At first glance, it may seem that authorizing the destruction of Flight 93 would be inconsistent with the principles of individualism, which state that individuals may not be sacrificed for the so-called greater good of the greater number.

However, such action *is* consistent with individualism when viewed in context of protecting life. As stated in *The Future Is Calling; Part One (The Chasm)*, we are justified in taking the life of another to protect our own lives, but that justification does not arise from the superiority of our numbers. It arises from each of us separately. This airline episode complicates the issue, because the decision to take the lives of a planeload of passengers was made by those whose lives were not threatened at the moment. This leads to the related question of whether we are justified in using deadly force to protect the lives of *others* as well as ourselves. Most people would say yes. In fact, they would say it is not only justifiable; it is obligatory. However, we sometimes are faced with a conflict between two people or two groups and are compelled to choose sides. This is where numbers may actually make a difference. For example: Two rafts are headed toward the precipice of a huge waterfall. One raft has one person in it and the other has ten. We have only one rope to throw and time for only one rescue. Which raft do we save? Clearly, assuming everything else is equal, we must rescue the one with the most people. If everything else is *not* equal, then other criteria may come into play, such as the seriousness of the threat, the chances for success, or the perceived merit of those to be saved. If the single passenger were a great inventor or poet or philosopher or leader while the ten were murderers who had escaped from prison, the decision might be different. However, while it is true that the *decision* may be based on numeric superiority or some other logic, the *justification* is not. The justification comes from our individual obligation to defend the lives of others. Therefore, if Woodrow Wilson or FDR truly believed that the sacrifice of a few thousand Americans was necessary to save the lives of millions of other Americans, their actions would have been consistent with the principles of individualism. However, if they merely feigned this concern as an excuse for other agendas, such as the expansion of economic and political power or building a New World Order “closer to the hearts desire,” then they were following the ethics of collectivism.