

SPECIAL AFTERNOON EDITION TERRORISM STRIKES THE U.S.

10:36 a.m.

SOMERSET PLANE CRASH



Pittsburgh airport OK; United, American confirm lost planes

Seven flights landed at Pittsburgh International Airport after the Federal Aviation Administration grounded all air traffic this morning, said JoAnn Jenny, a spokeswoman for the Allegheny County Airport Authority. No more flights are expected today.

The airport has not been evacuated, she said, but lots of airport employees have been sent home. Customer service employees are helping stranded passengers find food and lodging. Jenny wanted to emphasize that "this facility was never threatened."

She said neither of the planes involved in today's New York City collision originated from Pittsburgh. The airport authority did get a call this morning from 911 units in Somerset and Westmoreland counties, where United Airlines flight 93 crashed. The Newark, N.J. flight was bound to San Francisco.

On behalf of the airline CEO James Goodwin said: "The thoughts of everyone at United are with the passengers and crew of these flights. Our prayers are also with everyone on the ground who may have been involved."

"United is working with all the relevant authorities, including the FBI, to obtain further information on these flights," he said.

The airline, which put a ground stop on all operations worldwide, said customers needing more information should call 800-932-8555.

American Airlines confirmed that it lost two aircraft this morning — flight 11, a Boeing 767 in route from Boston to Los Angeles with 81 passengers, nine flight attendants and two pilots; and flight 77, a Boeing 757 operating from Washington Dulles to Los Angeles with 58 passengers, four flight attendants and two pilots.

American said it was working closely with U.S. government authorities and would not release more information as of press time. "We are horrified by these tragic events," said Donald J. Carty, chairman and chief executive officer of American Airlines, which also operates TWA and American Eagle. "Our thoughts and prayers go out to the families of all involved."

All US Airways planes have been accounted for. All Delta planes are grounded and accounted for as well.

All American airports closed today in wake of the terrorist activity nationwide. At the Pittsburgh airport, Catina Bowery of Kingsport, Tenn., awaits word as to when her flight will leave for Baltimore.

United jetliner crashes in Somerset

By Dennis B. Roddy
Post-Gazette Staff Writer

A United Airlines jetliner flying between New Jersey and San Francisco crashed in flames on a hillside in Somerset County today, apparently killing all 45 on board and raising dark speculation that the crash could be linked to a day of spectacular terrorist attacks on jetliners and public buildings in the United States.

The Boeing 757 flight fell from the sky in midmorning, shortly after hijacked jetliners slammed into the World Trade Center and another aircraft was striking the Pentagon.

Initial, but unconfirmed reports, said Palestinian terrorists were claiming credit for the attacks. Authorities today were trying to determine if the Somerset crash is linked to the day's terrorism.

The Westmoreland County Emergency Operations Center said it received a cell phone call at 9:58 a.m. from a man who said he was a passenger aboard the flight. The man said he had locked himself in a bathroom and told 911 dispatchers that the plane had been hijacked. He said he thought the plane was going down and told dispatchers that he heard an explosion and saw white smoke on the plane. Then the line went dead. Dispatchers contacted the FBI.

The plane went down near the town of Shanksville, on hillsides dotted with old strip mines. Rescue workers donned scuba gear to search for victims and wreckage.

"It's mass confusion here," said Bob Stull, of the tiny Shanksville Volunteer Fire Department as emergency crews swarmed over the area.

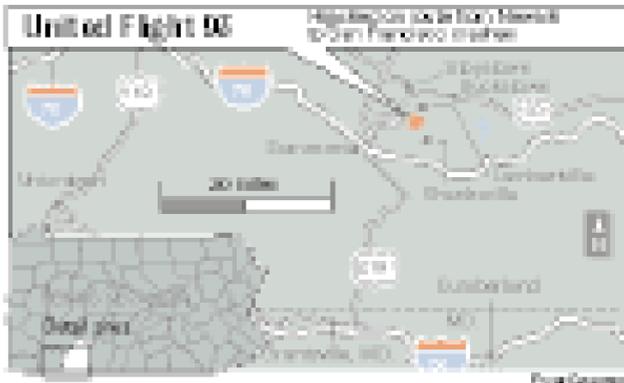
Sanders Ergas, director of emergency medicine at UPMC Lee Regional Hospital in Somerset, was driving to the crash site when he got word over his cell phone that there were no survivors, said Patty Kataraki, hospital spokeswoman.

Hospitals throughout Somerset, Cambria and Allegheny Counties had been on standby to receive victims.

The plane went down about one or two miles south of Route 30 near Stoystown, north of the village of Shanksville.

"This is incredible," said Michael Van Lenten, whose company is based nearby. "We're all on pins and needles."

Rescue helicopter services at Pittsburgh and Johnstown hospitals were the only air-



craft given the go-ahead to take to the air as the Federal Aviation Administration grounded virtually every other flight nationwide in a desperate attempt to preempt any further hijackings.

There was not much to search for. Stull said the largest piece of the plane — one of the largest airliners in commercial use in the United States — was 2-by-4 feet.

"This looks a great deal like a hijacking gone wrong," said a Philadelphia-based terrorism researcher who spoke on condition of anonymity. The plane's flight path, west-bound between Newark and San Francisco, suggested it might have been targeted as one of the craft to be flown into a building.

Greg Chiapelli, spokesman for Somerset Hospital, said all elective surgeries were cancelled and visitors were moved out of the hospital in anticipation of crash victims.

"We always have six doctors on staff in the emergency department, but we've called in everybody we could, surgeons, family physicians, they're all here," Chiapelli said.

Throughout the region, people reacted in horror, and government officials shut down flights, schools, bridges and buildings that looked as if they might be inviting targets.

"We recognize this as a national emergency and wish to allow students and employees to attend to their personal situations and their families," said Mark Kamlet, provost of Carnegie Mellon University as he ordered classes cancelled.

The University of Pittsburgh and Duquesne University also cancelled classes. Security was stepped up at the Software Engineering Institute in Oakland and the National Robotics Engineering Consortium in Lawrenceville.

Wes Clydesdale, 35, a U.S. Steel systems designer who works on the 16th floor of the USX Tower — the tallest building between the East Coast and Cleveland — said he had been told to evacuate the building "due to the events of the day."

Office workers streamed out of Downtown buildings and headed for the subway station on Grant Street.

Visitors to the city congregated around television sets as the drama unfolded, both nationally and locally.

"How can this happen in this country with all the security you have?" said Freck Te Riele, an engineer visiting Pittsburgh from the Netherlands.

Jeffrey Hunker, dean of the Heinz School of Public Policy and Management at Carnegie Mellon University and the top cyber terrorism official in the Clinton White House, noted that "Europe, Japan and other parts of the world have been living with the daily threat of terrorism for awhile. At some point, despite the best efforts of the United States government, it was inevitable that we were going to see an increase in terrorism within the United States."

"I think that it's part of a worldwide trend. I'm really sorry that we are seeing this today but in some ways it was inevitable, sort of a new world order that we're experiencing. Today we are seeing a multiplicity of criminal organizations and terrorist organizations that oppose what the U.S. stands for. This is something that the Bush administration and Clinton administration have recognized and have been making investments to prepare for."

But despite those preparations, a response isn't going to be easy. "This is not like the Gulf War where we were able to line up our tanks against a well-defined enemy. The threat in many ways is difficult to track. It's ambiguous. It's constantly changing so this is a different sort of national security threat."

Some local groups had sharply different reactions to how the United States should respond to the incident.

Howard Rieger, president of the United Jewish Federation, said his sympathies went out to the victims and their families, and said the U.S. must respond because the terrorist acts "strike at the heart of what we thought was our peaceful existence."

"Terrorism cannot be appeased ... it must be confronted wherever it exists."

A more cautious reaction came from Molly Rush, organizer at the Thomas Merton Center, a local peace group.

"We are concerned that the [Bush] administration not take the kind of retaliatory steps that would create more innocent victims. There is no way of knowing exactly what Mr. Bush is willing to do. We are deeply concerned that any response be measured and not simply a knee-jerk reaction that would escalate the violence."

At the Pittsburgh Diocese of the Roman Catholic Church, Auxiliary Bishop David Zubik offered a noon Mass at St. Mary of Mercy church Downtown. The diocese traditionally offers masses during national crises.

Many other churches were planning prayer services in response to the crisis.

Contributing to this story were Post-Gazette Staff Writers Tom Barnes, Gary Rotstein, Sally Kalson, Mackenzie Carpenter, Chris Snowbeck, Milan Simonich, Ron Cook, Byron Spice, Deborah Mendenhall, Caroline Abels, Barbara White-Stack, John O'Brien, Rachel Conway, Pamela Winnick and Anita Srikameswaran.

"...debris field spread over an area size of a football field..."

By Cindi Lash and Ernie Hoffman
Post-Gazette Staff Writers

Eric Peterson of Lambertville was working with a friend in his auto shop this morning. They heard a plane and looked up and saw a large aircraft close to the ground.

"I actually thought it was going to hit a house here in town," said Peterson. It blew out windows of a nearby farmhouse when it crashed.

As it went over started going end over end, Peterson said, and then dropped below a tree line and exploded. Peterson saw a flash and then a mushroom cloud of smoke.

The plane went down on a strip mine field. Peterson and his friend rushed to the field and looked for bodies, but couldn't find any. They called out, but heard nothing.

"There was a crater in the ground that was really burning. There were pieces of fuselage and clothing all over the area, burning, said Peterson. He said he didn't see any debris longer than a couple of feet long.

State Trooper Tom Spallone of Greensburg have confirmed that the plane was United Flight 93, a 757, that departed this morning from Newark en route to San Francisco. It crashed in a ravine near an abandoned strip mine in what some witnesses described as a fire ball. The site is between Shanksville and Bucktown, near Diamond T Coal Co., in Friedens.

Spallone said the plane was still smoldering at 12:30. He said officials were trying to keep people from scene and confirmed that there are no survivors. He said the "debris field spread over an area size of a football field, maybe two footballs fields." The impact of the crash was so severe that the biggest piece of debris he has seen there is no bigger than 2 feet.

John Hugya, an administrative assistant to U.S. Rep John Murtha, said he has been told that the plane initially flew over Cambria County Airport in Johnstown. There was no communication from the plane, and the plane was not responding to Cleveland Center, which is how they knew it was one of the hijacked planes.

Reporters who had covered the USAir Flight 427 crash in Hopewell said that the scene was eerily reminiscent of that crash, with a rural scene, beautiful weather, and lack ambulances coming to the scene.