

Paul Wellstone: more questions, fewer answers

Jim Fetzer (READER WEEKLY 9 January 2003, pp. 12-13)

As I explained in my last column ("Paul Wellstone: The Plot Thickens," *Reader Weekly*, 2 January 2003), the most obvious possible explanations for the crash that killed Paul Wellstone, his wife and staff--such as mechanical problems, pilot error, and bad weather--cannot be sustained as likely. The King Air A100 turns out to be a highly reliable aircraft with an excellent safety record; there were two pilots aboard, one of whom had the highest possible certification; and the weather was perfectly fine. (Take a look at the cover of the 2 January 2003 issue, in case you have any doubts!)

The latest explanation, published in the *Star Tribune* (29 December 2002), is that the pilots committed a blunder that turned into a stall, where airspeed had dropped to 85 knots. That theory does not withstand critical inspection, when the pilots' qualifications and the suitability of the weather are taken into account. Indeed, with this plane, a loud alarm sounds at 85 knots warning the pilot(s) that a stall is imminent, but leaving enough time to compensate. Experiments with these aircraft indicate that they only actually stall out below 70 knots.

This means other, less obvious, possible explanations have to be considered, even if—on moral, political, or personal grounds--we would prefer not to confront them. These include the possibility that the plane might have been disabled by a small bomb, by a canister of gas, or by an electro-magnetic pulse. The most salient feature of the crash is the loss of communication that occurred simultaneously with the loss of control. This is difficult to explain by other, less sinister, causes. Neither pilot error, mechanical problems nor difficult weather can explain it.

It would have taken only a moment to report, for example, that the plane had come in

out-of-alignment with the runway and that another attempt was being undertaken, as the stalling-out scenario would have it. Only a moment. "We're turning around and trying again!" would have been enough to notify Gary Ulman, the Assistant Manager on duty at the Eveleth-Virginia airport, what was going on. Instead, Ulman heard the clicks of the microphone indicating that the runway lights were being activated--and nothing more. No words, no sounds--nothing but silence!

The plane had been expected to land on its flight from St. Paul between 10:20 and 10:30 AM as the Senator came to Eveleth for the funeral of a friend. Instead, a possible crash alert sounded at 10:50 and Ulman took to the air in an effort to locate the plane. Within a few minutes, he had located the crash site about two mile south of the airport, which was visible from blue smoke rising into the sky.

That in itself raises questions, because, as Christopher Bollyn of The American Free Press has observed, the fuselage burned for hours emitting blue smoke, when the aircraft's kerosene fuel, which was stored in tanks in its wings, should have emitted thick, black smoke instead. Why was the fuselage burning rather than the wings, especially when the wings were found separated from the fuselage?

(<http://www.thetruthseeker.co.uk/article.asp?ID=265>).

The blue smoke allowed Ulman to locate the site of the crash between 10:55 and 11 AM. When he returned to the airport, he observed that local fire trucks had arrived. He took the fire chief up to survey the landscape and ascertain the most appropriate access route into the crash site, which was a road about 500 yards south of the wreckage. The time was 11:15 AM. Astonishingly, according to Rick Wahlberg, the Sheriff of St. Louis County, a team of FBI agents was on the crash site by noon!

Ulman told the *Reader* that, with all the phones he had to answer and people with whom

he had to speak, he did not notice precisely when the FBI arrived, but he did notice their presence at the airport no later than 1 p.m. As Christopher Bollyn discovered, these special agents were from the Twin Cities, not from Duluth, even though they had driven to Eveleth from Duluth using cars they had rented there. The FBI was certainly prompt to reach the crash site around noon, only 45 minutes after the occurrence of the crash had been confirmed by Ulman. And Gary had not even notified them.

This situation appears remarkable enough to undertake a reconstruction of what must have been the purported FBI time line, using *MapQuest* to estimate trips of this kind. The FBI Office in Minneapolis is located at 111 Washington Avenue South, Minneapolis, MN 55401. Assuming that the plane the feds would use would be situated at Herbert Humphrey Terminal, which many special flights take as their point of departure, the distance turns out to be 12.41 miles, with a MapQuest estimated travel time of 17 minutes.

The HHH premise does not represent any stretch, moreover, since even if their plane had been located at one of the regional airports, such as Crystal or Eden Prairie, it would have taken at least 17 minutes to get there on the assumption that traffic is not very heavy. If the plane the feds were using had been flown earlier in the day, it might have been ready for departure almost upon their arrival. If it were the plane's first flight, however, preparation might have required 30 minutes, which could at least partially overlap with time spent reaching the airport.

If these guys did not have to pass through airport security, then they would not have lost additional time consumed by having their luggage examined, the contents of their pockets evacuated, and even their shoes removed. Still, it takes time to access and to board even their own private plane. Let us assume that the time from arrival at the airport to entering the plane was as few as 10 minutes. (That is a conservative estimate, all things considered, but let's acknowledge the efficiency of the federal government in times of crisis!)

Take off, alas!, is not automatic, but might well consume anywhere from 10 to 30 minutes, especially if the plane they took was a regularly schedule commercial carrier. But let's make the simplifying assumption that the time from entering the plane to its actual departure from the airport could have been as little as 10 minutes. $17 + 10 + 10 = 37$ minutes at a minimum just to get the team to the plane and the plane in the air.

Now I have made the trip from the Twin Cities to Duluth International Airport many times, and a flight time of 40 minutes sounds about right to me. Assuming it was a small, private, "FBI ONLY" plane, then exiting the plane could be expedited. If it was an ordinary commercial flight with other passengers, however, then it might have taken longer. Let's assume the FBI charters its own and that it only took 5 minutes to exit. That means it had to have been $37 + 40 + 5 = 82$ minutes or 1:22 just to make it to the Hertz counter.

Here real problems can arise. Just how long do you think that it took the FBI to rent a car?

Well, there are forms to fill out and licenses to produce and credit cards to process. If anyone has gone through this in less than 10 minutes, they probably deserve a prize!

And then there's the matter of finding the car and packing the trunk.

Now traveling to Eveleth is something that I have done in the past-not to Eveleth, precisely, but to Gilbert. At a certain juncture in the road, Gilbert is to the right and Eveleth to the left. By my *MapQuest* maps, the distance to Virginia, which is immediately adjacent to Eveleth, is 61 miles, with a driving time-absent a police escort-no less than 50 minutes. Even though I have a heavy foot, it has taken my wife and me that long to reach the junction.

These guys, of course, were not heading for a pleasant meal at The Whistling Bird, as were we, but for the gruesome wreckage of a King Air A100. Actually getting to the scene of the crash, of course, is something else entirely. According to the *Pioneer Press* (October 27, 2002), "Crews rode all-terrain vehicles to the site, about a half-mile from the nearest road, and had to vary their routes to avoid becoming mired in the swamp with up to 2 feet of

water." Anybody's guess, but certainly it had to take another 10 minutes--at the absolute minimum--to arrive at the site.

So if we take 1:22 to get to Hertz, :10 more to rent and find the car, :50 to make it to Eveleth and another :10 to reach the actual site of the crash, then it should have taken these special agents at the very least 2:32 to make their trip, which remains a very conservative estimate. Yet according to the Sheriff of St. Louis County, they were on the scene at noon!

The crash, you may recall, did not actually occur until about 10:20 AM and had not been visually confirmed by Gary Ulman until 11 AM. Ulman did not notify the FBI that there had been a crash--ever! Even if a 911 operator had notified the FBI around 11 AM, how in the world did these very special agents know that they needed to head for the airport by 9:28 AM in order to be in Eveleth by noon? Perhaps the FBI possesses psychic powers and can anticipate the occurrence of tragedies of this kind in advance!

Or perhaps the FBI was in the position to anticipate the occurrence of this tragedy, without them? Even if we suppose the Sheriff of St. Louis County made a mistake in his recollection and that the FBI was only on the scene an hour later, as Ulman clearly recalls, that doesn't explain their arrival time. These agents might have had an additional hour but would still have had to depart for the airport by 10:28 AM!

The FBI might reply that the agents on the scene at noon had arrived from Bemidji rather than from Minneapolis or Duluth. But anyone familiar with a map of Minnesota will immediately perceive that this point of origin only makes the matter worse. It would have taken at least 1:40 minutes to reach Eveleth, which dictates a 10:20 time of departure. Conceivably, only agents from Duluth could have arrived by noon (with an 11 AM time of departure), but a female employee of the FBI office in Duluth assured Bollyn that Minneapolis agents had arrived first.

The FBI has displayed similar acumen in the past. For example, Jean Hill and her girlfriend, Mary Moorman, had been taking pictures of her boyfriend, who was a motorcycle patrolman escorting the Presidential limousine through Dealey Plaza. Immediately after the assassination, she was interrogated for an hour and a half. When Jean explained that she had heard at least one shot from the grassy knoll, they told her that she had to be mistaken, because there had been only three shots and they had all come from above and behind.

Jean's story may be found in *JFK: The Last Dissenting Witness* (1992). J. Edgar also stationed agents at the photo labs around Dallas for two weeks following the assassination, where they appropriated every photograph and film they could find that captured any part of the assassination, leaving a card in their place, a copy of which appears in Richard Trask, *Pictures of the Pain* (1994). The vast majority of these photographic records were never returned.

When LBJ created the Warren Commission (so-called after its Chairman, Chief Justice of the United States, Earl Warren), he designated the FBI as the sole investigative agency for the inquiry. Hoover employed an ingenious triple-tiered strategy: if a witness knew too much, you simply didn't call him; but if, by chance, you did call him, then you didn't ask the important questions that he could answer; and if, by chance, those questions were asked and answered, then you simply changed his testimony.

By securing the perimeter at the Wellstone crash site and discouraging photographs from being taken, the FBI was able to control access to the evidence. Experts have reported that planes of this kind are usually equipped with black boxes, because their clients are typically well-to-do, including celebrities and dignitaries. Indeed, the officials on the scene searched for a cockpit voice recorder for a day and a half before declaring there had not been one.

If indeed the FBI departed before the accident had even taken place, then the most reasonable explanation is that the FBI knew that it was going to occur. What other justification could

possibly have warranted such a risky course of action, other than an deliberate cover up?

The head of the NTSB, Carol Carmody, was even reported by the *Pioneer Press* (27 October 2002) to have explained, "She had consulted with the FBI and there was no intelligence information and no evidence in the wreckage to suggest any possibility of terrorism."

That's odd on several grounds. Surely it was the function of the NTSB to undertake the investigation of the causes of such a crash, including any possible indications of terrorism.

The NTSB should be reporting to the FBI, not the other way around. Notably, Carmody is a former employee of the CIA. Furthermore, what are the indications of terrorism? A small bomb, perhaps, or a gas canister, or the use of EMP? How could these causes have possibly been ruled out at such an early stage?

As Christopher Bollyn astutely observes, if the wing section is charred but the tree is not, then either the wing was moved from the crash site (unlikely, and probably strictly forbidden in accident investigations) or the wing was on fire before the plane hit the ground (accounting for the lack of damage to the tree itself). This suggests that the small bomb hypothesis has to be taken seriously and that early reports from local residents, that there was an explosion, may have been actively suppressed.

Other reporters who have raised what should be easy questions about the FBI's arrival time include Michael Ruppert and Joe Taglieri. They have reported that Paul McCabe, a special agent from Minneapolis, has claimed the Minneapolis contingent only arrived about 3 PM.

That contradicts Sheriff Wahlberg's report that he had arrived about 1:30 PM and saw Minneapolis FBI agents he knows personally who were already on the scene. When McCabe was asked about logs with official times, he became evasive, claiming, "We don't really keep log time, per se, like that," and suggested that times were not essential parts of investigative reports (<http://mail-archive.com/ctrl@listserv.aol.com/msg99496.html>).

Ruppert contacted Lt. Tim Harken of the St. Louis Country Sheriff's Department, who

maintained official logs of arrival times at the scene. After telling Ruppert that he would retrieve his files and check for the time, he has been unresponsive. The *Reader* left a message for Lt. Harkenon at his number at the Hibbing Sheriff's Office 8 January and we are awaiting a reply. Perhaps our new St. Louis' County Sheriff, Ross Litman, could contribute to clearing up this crucial point? It would be a good thing if our officials could help to answer questions rather than raise more of them.

Who could have directed the FBI to participate in such a cover-up, other than our own government? After all, Attorney General John Ashcroft eventually rose to power as a result of a similar accident. As Nafeez Ahmed, the author of *The War on Freedom* (2002), has observed, the Bush administration has justified blocking an inquiry into 9/11 on the ground that it would undermine its efforts to combat terrorism: "In other words, the administration (has) suppressed an inquiry into the greatest terror attack in U.S. history in the name of fighting terrorism."

Jim Fetzer, a professor of philosophy at UMD, is the editor of *Assassination Science* (1998) and of *Murder in Dealey Plaza* (2000). He maintains a research web sit at www.assassinationscience.com.