

The Missiles That Brought Down TWA Flight 800

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[War is a Crime](#)

Region: [USA](#)

Theme: [Intelligence](#)

If the U.S. public began to raise a fuss about U.S. missile strikes that blow up large numbers of civilians at wedding parties abroad, it's not beyond the realm of the imaginable that the U.S. government would begin blaming the explosions on faulty candles in the wedding cakes. A similarly implausible excuse was used to explain the 1996 explosion of TWA flight 800 off Long Island, New York, and the U.S. public has thus far either swallowed the story whole or ignored the matter.

If you watch Kristina Borjesson's new film, TWA Flight 800, you'll see a highly persuasive case that this passenger jet full of passengers was brought down by missiles, killing all on board.

A CIA propaganda video aired by U.S. television networks fits with none of the known facts, makes the claim that there were no missiles, and offers no theory as to what then did cause the explosion(s) and crash into the sea.

A coverup by the FBI and the NTSB (National Transportation Safety Board) was blatant and extensive, involving intimidation of witnesses and investigators, tampering with evidence, false testimony before Congress, censoring reports, and numerous violations of normal protocols. Some of the government's own official investigators concluded that the explosion(s) occurred outside the airplane.

They were not permitted to write analyses in their reports, as in every other investigation. Their reports were censored. They were forbidden to testify. Some 200 eyewitnesses — people on the ground and in other planes, at least many of whom described seeing one or more missiles rising from the ground to the airplane — were censored as well. Not a single witness was permitted to testify at the public hearing.

The military staged a test firing of missiles with witnesses, in an attempt to prove that the witnesses would either not see the missiles or testify inaccurately about what they saw. However, the witnesses all reported seeing the missiles well. The report on this test came to the opposite conclusion of what had been hoped for, but the government fed the original, hoped-for line to the media, which dutifully reported it.

Investigators thought and still think a missile or missiles brought down the plane. Eyewitnesses thought and still think the same. Explosives residue in the plane wreckage and other physical evidence in the wreckage suggests missile(s). Data from several different radars at the time of the disaster show pieces of the plane being blown off at speeds that could only have been generated by high explosives, not by a fuel tank exploding. Radar data also show the plane falling, not rising. (The CIA claimed, without offering any evidence, that the plane rose into the sky as it was exploding, thus accounting for witnesses' reports

of seeing objects rising.) The damage to the seats and passengers in the plane was random, not greater closer to a fuel tank.

No more evidence was ever offered for a fuel tank exploding than could be offered in the theoretical fiction of a wedding cake exploding, or — for that matter — was ever offered for the *Maine* having been attacked by the Spanish in Havana harbor or for the Gulf of Tonkin incident having occurred or for the WMDs piling up in Iraq, or than has been offered thus far for the dreaded Iranian nuclear bomb program. There was no wiring near the fuel tank that could have caused it to explode and no other explanation than faulty wiring even hypothesized.

The film concludes that likely three missiles were shot from near the Long Island coast, including at least one from a ship at sea. The film does not address the question of who did this or why. But it presents the evidence that it happened, and that the coverup began immediately, with the disaster site being quickly closed off and guarded by roughly 1,000 police officers, roughly half of them FBI — not the normal procedure for a plane crash. The likely speculation is, of course, that the U.S. military committed this crime. Was someone on the plane targeted for murder, and everyone else killed in the process? Was this a test of technology? Was it a mistake? Was it part of some larger plot that failed to develop? I don't know.

But I do know that the nation didn't go into a collective state of vicious rabid insanity, demanding vengeance against evildoers who hate us for our freedoms. No nations were destroyed in a sick parody of justice following the destruction of TWA flight 800. But neither were those responsible held publicly accountable in any way.

The [New York Times](#) seems impressed by the film and favors a new investigation but laments the supposed lack of any entity that could credibly perform an investigation. Think about that. The U.S. government comes off as so untrustworthy in the film that it can't be trusted to re-investigate itself. And a leading newspaper, whose job it ought to be to investigate the government, feels at a loss for what to do without a government that can credibly and voluntarily perform the media's own job for it and hold itself accountable.

The [New York Post](#), too, takes the film quite seriously, and simply recounts its arguments without adding any commentary other than agreement. But the [Daily News](#) offers instead a textbook example of how self-censorship and obedience to authoritarianism work. Here's the complete *Daily News* review with my comments inserted:

“If you need to get a person's attention fast, just whisper, ‘There's something the government isn't telling you.’

“Works every time.”

Like the time the NSA claimed to be complying with the Fourth Amendment? Like the time nobody was being tortured in Iraq? Like the time the fracking studies showed no damage to ground water? Like the time drones weren't killing any civilians with their missile strikes?

Sure, there are bound to be times when the government is honest with us. I can't think of any off the top of my head, but it stands to reason that there are. Even a stopped clock is right twice a day. And it's certainly possible to invent all sorts of fantasies to allege the

government to be lying about. I'm not convinced Obama was born in Africa, aliens visited New Mexico, the World Trade Center was blown up from within, or every person who emails me to complain about it is really being zapped with invisible mind-control weapons (for all I know they just watch television and come away feeling like that). But shouldn't we take claims of government deception as possibly right and possibly wrong and follow the evidence where it leads? I'm not willing to swear any of the things I list here isn't true unless evidence establishes that.

"In this case, filmmakers Kristina Borjesson and Tom Stalcup are convinced that ill-fated TWA Flight 800, which exploded over Great South Bay on July 17, 1996, was shot down by a missile."

And does the evidence suggest that they are right or wrong? Should we just pretend to know that they're wrong because the government says so? Yep:

"The original government investigation and later a second probe by the National Transportation Safety Board disagreed. Both concluded the explosion was caused by a spark in the center fuel tank."

Yet they offered no explanation for where such a spark might have come from, or why so many airplanes have been permitted to fly since, in danger of falling victim to such a spark.

"So someone is wrong. But 'TWA Flight 800' says it's more insidious than that. The government also knows it was a missile, the film strongly suggests, and simply chooses to lie. Charges of conspiratorial coverups are as common as jaywalking, of course, but 'TWA Flight 800' has more evidence than most. The advocates here include several original investigators as well as aircraft engineers, transportation and safety experts. There also are a half dozen people, civilians with no agendas, who all say they saw something streaking across the sky toward the plane before it exploded."

Why is that insidious? You don't know whether all these people are right, but the suggestion that they might be is insidious? The film in fact doesn't say the government "simply" chooses to lie. In fact, many in the government choose to speak out, forming much of the basis for the film. Others choose to cover up what happened. Most of them are clearly just following orders. Others must have motivations, but whether those motivations are simple or complex is not touched on in the film — as this review goes on to acknowledge:

"The film doesn't really address two of the biggest questions raised by most conspiracy charges. First, why would someone cover up the truth, and second, given the number of people involved in this investigation, could they all keep a secret this big for 17 years?"

In fact, they aren't all keeping it secret. Many have been shouting the truth, as they see it, from the rooftops. Others recount why they've kept quiet. One woman explains that she was applying for U.S. citizenship and was threatened that her application would be rejected if she spoke out. The film does not address motivations for the coverup, but let me take a wild stab at doing so: If the U.S. military blew up a passenger jet full of passengers, including U.S. citizens, for no damn good reason, wouldn't we need an explanation for its

wanting to go public with that? Doesn't the military's wanting to keep that quiet require no explanation at all?

When the Joint Special Operations Command murders Afghan women in a night raid and then digs bullets out of their bodies with knives and claims that they were killed by their families, and then later admits the truth, are we shocked by the routine lies or by the vicious crime? Wouldn't we be more seriously shocked if the U.S. military gratuitously blurted out something true? Wouldn't taking responsibility for TWA 800 be a remarkable act of civic virtue worthy of the record books?

"But the film isn't after 'why.' It just wants to say that a lot of physical and circumstantial evidence points to a missile.

"Toward that goal, it's on target."

It is indeed, though one wouldn't have guessed that from the beginning of this newspaper's review, from media coverage in general, from history books, or from how most people have been conditioned to react to the next suspicious disaster yet to come.

David Swanson's books include "[War Is A Lie](#)." He blogs at <http://davidswanson.org> and <http://warisacrime.org> and works for <http://rootsaction.org>. He hosts [Talk Nation Radio](#). Follow him on Twitter: [@davidcswanson](#) and [FaceBook](#).

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