

Colombian jet explodes Anonymous telephone caller claims drug traffickers had bombs implanted

BOGOTA, Colombia (AP) — A Colombian jetliner crashed on the outskirts of Bogota on Monday shortly after takeoff, and all 107 people aboard were killed. A caller to a radio station claimed drug traffickers bombed the jet.

Witnesses said the Avianca Airlines Boeing 727-100 exploded before it plunged into a hilly area south of the capital, about a mile from a neighborhood of slum houses and factories. Pieces of the jet were found up to six miles from the main point of impact, police said.

Hours later, a man called Radio Caracol and claimed that a group called The Extraditables blew up the jet to kill five police informants. He said the five gave police information that led to the discovery of the Medellin drug cartel leader's hideout.

The man did not identify himself, and the claim could not be immediately authenticated.

"The plane was flying along when suddenly it exploded, broke in two and fell in flames and smoke," a witness, Alfonso Moreno, said in an interview with the radio network Caracol.

Another witness, Mario Vasquez, said, "I heard explosions and I thought there was some problem with transformers in the electrical station, but I looked up and saw a plane explode in the air, and bodies and pieces of luggage were falling."

Two Colombian air force pilots in another plane reported seeing two explosions on the jet, the director of Colombia's Civil Aviation Authority, Col. Jorge Gonzalez, said.

The airline refused comment on the reports of explosions. Avianca spokesman Patricia Duarte said the plane carried 101 passengers and a crew of six and that all were killed. Their nationalities were not immediately known.

No one on the ground was hurt, spokesmen for Colombia's Civil Defense teams said in radio interviews.

Investigators have found no evidence of a bomb yet, Col. Edgar Leal, chief of national police for the state, said. He also said the flight recorder had not been found.

Flight 203 was bound for Cali, about 190 miles southwest of Bogota. Cali is the headquarters of one of Colombia's biggest cocaine cartels and has been the site of frequent bombings and other attacks since the government declared war on drug lords in August.

The plane took off from Bogota's El Dorado International Airport at 7:15 a.m., and the pilot, Jose Ossa, told the tower at 7:18 a.m. that everything was normal. Duarte told the Associated Press. It crashed shortly afterward.

One witness said he saw black smoke pouring from one of the plane's three engines and then the plane blew up.

Most of the wreckage was in an area about 200 feet by 50 feet. The biggest piece appeared to be about 50 feet long.

Leal said one piece of the jet was found six miles away. The RCN radio network said a body was found a half-mile from the main crash site.

Mother survives transplant; Gives part of liver to daughter

CHICAGO (AP) — Doctors placed a portion of a mother's liver into her daughter Monday in the nation's first living-donor transplant and reported the operation was going smoothly.

Doctors at the University of Chicago Medical Center, however, said the mother, Teresa Smith, sustained spleen damage and the organ had to be removed.

The surgery involving Mrs. Smith and her 21-month-old daughter, Alyssa, is the first liver transplant from a living donor in this country, doctors at the hospital said.

Hospital spokesman Ed Ernst said the girl went through a critical period of about 30 minutes without a liver "very well" before the segment was sutured into place shortly before 6 p.m. CDT.

"Everything's going extremely smoothly with the little girl," Ernst said.

After suturing the liver segment into place, doctors had to flush the preserving fluid out of the segment. Then they planned to make sure the liver was beginning to work properly before reconnecting blood vessels and bile ducts — a process that could take up to two hours, Ernst said.

During the surgery, surgeons accidentally damaged Mrs. Smith's spleen and had to remove it, Ernst said.

Mrs. Smith was out of surgery at 4 p.m. CDT and was listed in critical condition in the intensive care unit, although she is expected to be fine, Ernst said. People can live without their spleens, although it may make them more susceptible to infection, he said.

"She's fine, a little hurting, she has some pain," said Mrs. Smith's husband, John L. Smith, who visited her after the surgery.

If successful, the operation could provide a solution to a severe shortage of organs for children who need transplants, said doctors at the university hospital.

Alyssa suffers from an often-fatal liver disorder called biliary atresia, the leading cause for liver transplants involving children.

She had been waiting more than a year for a cadaver liver transplant when the Smiths heard about the hospital's plans for an experimental living-donor program in August. Liver transplants from living donors have been performed only three times — in Brazil, Australia and Japan. One child has died.

Mrs. Smith went into surgery at 7:35 a.m. CDT to begin the operation in which the left lobe of her liver — about one-third of the organ — was to be transplanted in her daughter.

"She was as eager to get started as she was a month ago when we first proposed this to her," said hospital spokesman Mary Fetsch. "She has not displayed any signs of doubt or hesitation."

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Dr. Christoph Broelsch led the surgical team in the two-phase operation. About 3½ hours into the mother's operation, doctors prepared Alyssa for the transplant.

Monday's surgery was complicated by the need to keep the removed portion of the liver intact, he said. But he noted the hospital's doctors had been transplanting portions of cadaver livers into children since 1984, "with better than 80 percent success."

A medical ethicist said using a parent as donor raises some serious questions.

Gandhi dissolves Parliament

NEW DELHI, India (AP) — The president dissolved Parliament on Monday, leaving Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi and a caretaker government to see India through what could be weeks of post-election uncertainty.

Gandhi's Congress Party had overwhelming control of Parliament, but voters in the world's most populous democracy took it away in three days of elections that began Wednesday, and left the party far short of a majority.

To retain power, Congress must find partners for what would be the first coalition government since India became independent of Britain in 1947.

The prime minister, who won a landslide victory for the Congress Party two months after the Oct. 31, 1984, assassination of his mother, Prime Minister Indira Gandhi, was leading his own race for re-election to Parliament.

Vote tabulations put Congress ahead of any single opposition group, but not far enough to govern

Ruling party loses majority in last election

alone.

The party of Gandhi's grandfather, Jawaharlal Nehru, has been out of power only once — for 29 months that began after an election loss in 1977 to an alliance that later came apart. The prime ministers during those 29 months were Morarji Desai and Charan Singh.

President Ramaswamy Venkataraman took the first step toward a coalition Monday by dissolving Parliament, on the Cabinet's recommendation. Parliament normally is dissolved before elections, but Indian law does not require it.

Growing opposition to Gandhi's leadership was reported within his party.

"If Congress wants to win anything, the prime minister must go," said Bhabani Sen Gupta, an independent analyst. "With Rajiv Gandhi, very few things are possible. Without Rajiv Gandhi, many things are possible."

When all votes are counted, the president probably will ask the party with the most seats to try to assemble a majority in the 543-seat Lok Sabha, or House of People, the lower house of Parliament where the power lies.

Many opposition leaders argued the president should turn to the party or alliance with the most popular support, regardless of the number of seats involved.

The two largest opposition groups, the five-party National Front and the right-wing Hindu Bharatiya Janata (Indian People's Party), opened talks on a forming a coalition.

Yashwant Sinha, spokesman for the Janata Dal, or People's Party, said, "The National Front will form the next government."

U.S. lodges protest with Soviet Union over alleged attempt to ship weapons

WASHINGTON (AP) — The State Department said today it lodged a strong protest with the Soviet Embassy concerning the "dangerous escalation" created by Nicaragua's alleged attempt to ship Soviet-bloc weaponry to leftist rebels in El Salvador.

Department spokesman Margaret Tutwiler said the Central American issue, as a result of the abortive weapons delivery attempt, will become a prime area of discussion when President Bush meets with Soviet President Mikhail S. Gorbachev on Dec. 2-3 in the Mediterranean off Malta.

The protest note deplors the "dangerous escalation of conflict, contrary to Soviet assurances," Tutwiler said.

She added that Bush will press the Soviets "to take ac-

tion to ensure their allies (Nicaragua and Cuba) cease this outrageous behavior."

The note was delivered to the Soviet charge d'affaires at 7 p.m. Saturday by Robert Kimmitt, the undersecretary of state for political affairs, and Bernard Aronson, the assistant secretary for inter-American affairs.

Delivery of the note on a Saturday evening reflected the concern with which the United States views the weapons shipment, Tutwiler said.

The note was sent just hours after Salvadoran military authorities said they discovered two light planes in El Salvador that were delivering shoulder-fired missiles to the leftist rebels.

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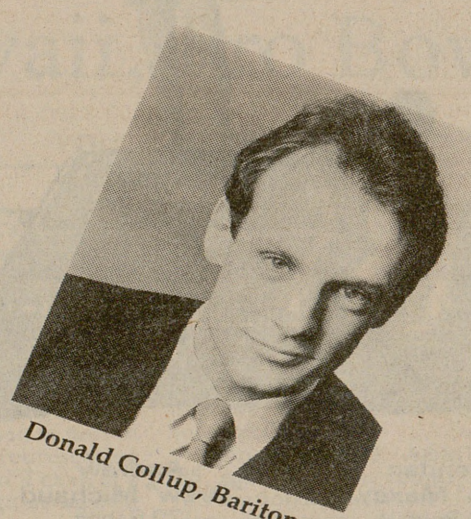
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