

Overview of FIRO Witness Study

Presented July 14, 2001

T. Shoemaker

There have been two NTSB public hearings on the crash. One was in December, 1997, when the original NTSB Witness Group released a report. The other one was in August, 2000. The first NTSB Witness Group examined 458 of the available witness reports. About two years after the disaster a second NTSB Witness Group was given 736 witness summaries. The difference in the two numbers of witness reports, 278, was the number of witness reports withheld by the FBI from the first Witness Group. Each item within this group of 278 witness reports involves a witness report involving a streak of light.

The witnesses themselves have not been part of any official hearing.

FIRO examined the 736 witness summaries released in April, 2000, and made its own evaluations. I will review those evaluations in a few minutes.

First, I want to give an overview of the NTSB crash scenario as it applies to what witnesses may have seen. Then I can tell you about some of the data that appears in the 1997 and 2000 NTSB witness reports and the FIRO study.

TWA Flight 800 was headed East and was at an altitude of approximately 13,800 feet when it was catastrophically damaged. It never ascended straight up from the surface or from near the surface of the ocean. After it became crippled, the NTSB states, it carried out a brief climb. Officials state that a trail of burning fuel was emitted by the aircraft itself. This streak began at an altitude of no less than 2.6 miles above the ocean.

Eyewitness accounts can be evaluated to determine whether they support or reject this scenario.

In the 1997 NTSB witness study, you will recall, there were 458 witness accounts. 183 of these witnesses described seeing a "streak" of light. Of that number, 102 witnesses described an origin for the streak of light. 96 of those 102 witnesses described the streak they saw as originating at the surface. Thus, even in the official release of data there is powerful evidence of witnesses not supporting the official crash scenario.

In the 2000 NTSB witness study 736 witness accounts were officially reviewed. Of that number, 258 witnesses observed a streak of light. In this study 33 witnesses reported an origin for that streak. 93% of them reported the streak they saw originated from the surface....again not supporting the official crash scenario.

FIRO's analysis primarily involved inspection of the available data for witnesses who saw a rising streak of light. We found 182 such witnesses. FIRO also examined the data for witnesses reporting a point of origin for the streak of light they saw. We found 67 such witnesses.

Here is what else we found:

1. 95% of the witnesses who reported a point of origin for the streak of light they saw reported it as originating at the surface, and not in the air where TWA Flight 800 was.
2. 56 witnesses described an angle or ascent for the streak. 87% of these people described it as vertical or nearly vertical. TWA Flight 800 did not fly or pop-up vertically.
3. 77 witnesses described a direction the streak traveled towards. Of these, 35 described the streak as moving Eastward. 34 described it as moving Westward, in opposition to the direction of the airliner.
4. 21 witnesses reported seeing more than one object in the air at the time of the disaster. 13 of these witnesses recognized one of the objects as an aircraft. 13 also stated that one of the objects they saw impacted with the other one.
5. We wound up with a group of 134 witness reports that mentioned an origin and/or a trajectory for the streak of light that was observed. In comparing what these witnesses reported with the official scenario (briefly described earlier in these comments), we conclude that 116 out of these 134 witness reports reject the official crash scenario and only 18 can be interpreted as supporting the official scenario. Thus we conclude that 86% of this group of witnesses reject the official explanation for the streak of light so many witnesses saw.

The FIRO study concludes with the realization that evidence exists among the official documentation that a streak of light originating in parts of the sky never occupied by TWA Flight 800 was reported by a very significant number of witnesses. Also, a streak of light moving in a direction never assumed by TWA Flight 800 was reported to have converged with the aircraft by a very significant number of witnesses. This is why FIRO believes the eyewitness evidence does not support the official crash scenario.

FIRO does not conclude as to what the sources of the streaks not consistent with the official scenario were. Arrival at such conclusions as those will require other types of research.

But the bottom line is: FIRO believes much of the eyewitness data rejects the official crash scenario and calls for immediate initiation of additional independent analysis of the information provided by the hundreds and hundreds of witnesses to the TWA Flight 800 disaster.

Even 5 years after the terrible TWA Flight 800 disaster the full meaning and implications of the witness information have not been officially shared with the American public.