

# DEADLY Departure

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Why the Experts Failed to  
Prevent the TWA Flight 800  
Disaster and How It  
Could Happen Again

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challenged by Kallstrom that if he had something to share with authorities he should do it, Salinger arrived in New York. Kallstrom's deputy Tom Pickard was sent to meet with him at a midtown hotel the evening of November 12.

What do you have that we can move on in this investigation? questioned Pickard as the men sat on the sofa in Salinger's suite at the Parker Meridian Hotel.

"Its all there on the Internet," Pickard remembers was Salinger's vague reply. "You guys are the investigators. Look at it."

What details do you have? What is the overwhelming evidence? Pickard asked, frustrated at Salinger's lack of answers. After an hour Pickard left. "The whole thing was bizarre," he said. "He wasted my time."

Salinger had become a magnet for assorted conspiracy theorists. The debate, simmering in the anonymity of the Internet, was now at full boil with a celebrity spokesman. Salinger gave credibility to the Internet chatter and the cyberspace residents, like Ian Goddard, who sustained it.

Right after the crash, Goddard, a thirty-five-year-old graphic artist, assiduously reviewed every bit of media coverage and created an impressive Web site that was a patchwork of news reports, smart-looking graphics, eyewitness quotes, and personal commentary.

Goddard's work impressed Salinger. The artist was delighted to become part of his investigative team that included an old friend of Salinger's, Mike Sommers. According to Goddard, "Sommers said he and Pierre went way back to the Kennedy Administration."

The three prepared a sixty-nine-page document, much of it from Goddard's Web site, the rest a litany of charges by unnamed sources and reports of sailors who witnessed the event but would not agree to be identified.

By the spring, Salinger and his team had hooked up with Richard Russell, who, like Goddard, was happy to have some-

one of Salinger's stature helping to "get the information out, one way or the other." Russell's contribution to the group was a videotape of the air traffic control data that had so intrigued the FAA the night of the crash.

Stills from the videotape were published in a popular French news magazine, *Paris Match*, along with a story bearing the byline of Goddard and Sommers.

After that, Russell traveled with Sommers to London, where the two met with staffers at ABC's London bureau. Russell says he was horrified to hear Sommers offer the videotape to ABC for \$1 million. Afterward, he says he thought he needed to warn Salinger that Sommers's motivations seemed different from their own. "It's a big mistake for you to be with him," Russell says he told Salinger. "He's not doing you any favors and he's doing you a lot of harm."

An ABC spokeswoman says the network turned Sommers down. Russell was no longer associating with Sommers when a similar, more subtle, often rambling proposal was put to news executives and a producer with the Larry King show at CNN.

"Larry could show the tape and you guys can . . . I have the rest of the story which is horrifying and I don't think Larry will want all the aspects of that story," he said, and, referring to the network's news division, "and you guys can have the rest of it. Yeah, provided Ted pays some money to TWA 800 victims."

What kind of money was he talking about?

"I don't know. You have to make an offer. Ted will know," Sommers replied, speaking of CNN founder Ted Turner. "It will make a hellava movie and a hellava book and Ted will make millions on it."

CNN passed on the Salinger exclusive.

For his role in the theft of TWA crash wreckage, Captain Terry Stacey pleaded guilty to misdemeanor theft charges in Federal court. A letter he had received from Pope John Paul II, whom he'd flown on a TWA 747 in September of 1987, was presented to the sentencing judge, who gave Stacey three years probation and a fine. He returned to TWA as a pilot and testified against James and Elizabeth Sanders, who were tried and convicted in April 1999 and sentenced to probation and community service on the eve of the third anniversary of the crash.

Ian Goddard posted a note on the Internet in November 1997 calling his earlier efforts to pin the crash on the Navy "reckless and a mistake." Pierre Salinger, saying he'd taken a beating in the press because of his pursuit of the missile theory, was no longer going to pursue the issue, either.

It would be wrong to dismiss the missile theorists as simply out of touch or paranoid; there were so many inconsistencies in the official statements. Many of the contradictions could be attributed to the unusual circumstances of the crash, the chaotic response, and the conflicting agendas of the major

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