

# Timing Error May Be Cause of Crash Research Grant to Address Air Quality

The Associated Press

NEW YORK — Investigators raised the possibility Wednesday that turbulence from the wake of a 747 led to the crash of American Flight 587, saying the doomed plane took off less than the standard two minutes after the jumbo jet.

"We do not know whether this contributed in any way to the actual accident, but we are looking at this very closely," said Marion Blakey, chairwoman of the National Transportation Safety Board.

Wake turbulence, the swirl of air behind a plane, can endanger planes flying too close behind or below each other. The phenomenon has been blamed for at least one deadly crash in the past.

Investigators want to know whether it caused Flight 587 to break apart three minutes after takeoff from Kennedy Airport on Monday, killing all 260 people aboard and as many as five on the ground.

The plane's tail assembly sheared away and its twin engines fell off as the jet went down.

Standard protocol says there should

be at least two minutes between takeoffs. However, Blakey said it appeared there was less than that between Flight 587, an Airbus A300, and a Japan Air Lines Boeing 747 that left ahead of it on the same runway.

"We believe that in fact it was 1 minute and 45 seconds," Blakey said.

She did not explain why this was so, but she said it appears air traffic controllers followed proper procedure. She said tower clearances for the two takeoffs came 2 minutes and 20 seconds apart.

Pointing to a map of the two planes' flight paths, Blakey noted that although the jumbo jet's path was 800 feet above Flight 587's, the winds probably pushed the turbulence lower.

The cockpit voice recorder from Flight 587's final minutes revealed two rattling noises and indicated the pilots complained about the wake of another plane before their aircraft went down.

Walter Sheriff, a retired American Airlines captain who studies the phenomenon, said the wake turbulence from the four-engine 747 could have struck the Airbus with "tornado-like lateral force."

The Federal Aviation Administration

has set minimum distances for planes flying near each other, based on aircraft size. After a 1992 crash in Billings, Mont., that killed eight people, federal investigators found that the pilot failed to follow the established "vortex avoidance procedure" and flew too close to a jet.

Blakey, at a news conference, also said Flight 587's other black box — its flight data recorder — was repaired by the manufacturer, allowing investigators to extract data on the last minutes of the doomed flight. The recorder had been scorched and banged up in the crash.

Both of the plane's engines have been recovered and taken to a hangar at Kennedy.

Authorities have not ruled out sabotage or other causes but have said all signs point to a mechanical failure.

"That does not mean we have concluded there was no crime. We simply have no evidence to date of a crime of terrorism," Attorney General John Ashcroft said.

The flight data recorder monitors nearly 200 separate functions in the European-made A300, including ruder movements.

"We'll be looking very carefully at how the tail failed," the NTSB's George Black Jr. said.

An FAA expert was headed to the site Wednesday to study the plane's tail assembly, an analysis that could lead to corrective measures or inspections. Blakey said American Airlines has also volunteered to do a sample inspection of its Airbus A300 fleet to ensure there are no problems with tail assemblies.

BY EMMA BURGIN  
Staff Writer

The U.S. Congress approved an appropriations bill last week allotting \$2.5 million for environmental research at UNC on water and air quality in the Triangle.

UNC's Department of Environmental Science and Engineering in conjunction with the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency will conduct the research that will test pollutants in the air and use models to monitor pollutants' reactions in different environments.

Bridget Lowell, press secretary for Rep. David Price, D-NC, said Price realizes the pressing need for solutions to North Carolina's environmental problem.

"Congressman Price suggested that federal money be used for this research. He recognizes that air quality is an important issue in North Carolina," Lowell said.

Cass Miller, chairman of the environmental science and engineering department, said funding for this research is appropriate for North Carolina.

"Since North Carolina has one-fourth of its counties violating national air quality regulations, I think it will be beneficial to the state," Miller said.

The bill states that \$1 million will be allotted for building models of environmental systems. It also calls for a \$1.5 million grant for a "one atmosphere" project, where researchers will be trying to find

solutions for poor air quality in the state.

Lowell said the grant will have a positive influence on North Carolina's air and water quality.

"Specifically for the 'one atmosphere' grant, it's a study that looks at all the pollutants and their impact on overall air quality," she said. "The modeling project has to do with contamination of the local air and water."

Lowell said the grant also will help the area deal with on-site research and emergencies.

"In the event of something real happening, for example, cleaning up flooded lagoons or former agricultural sites, we know what we're looking for," she said.

Miller said the money will have a big impact on the area and its students.

"The money comes to the department and the majority of it goes to graduate and some undergraduate students working on projects focused on environmental research," he said. "It will have a positive impact on the students and the department."

Lowell said Price advocates this research to ensure a normal way of life.

"(Price) has been a North Carolinian forever. He knows this is a problem people deal with every day," she said. "These issues affect their lives and where they are."

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structure to make decisions," she said. "There is no mechanism for the other partners to hear the presentations and provide input."

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## SYMPOSIUM

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In addition to the concern of commercialization, Dibbert said the academic integrity of student athletes and outside influence from alumni and trustee members also needs to be watched.

Dibbert said the Knight Commission recommended that presidents of schools in the six major athletic conferences, including the Atlantic Coast Conference, get together to address these issues.

"We need to slow the growth of the arms race and commercialization," said Dibbert, who also is the director of alumni affairs.

He said the responsibility falls on the president or chancellor of each school but that collectively they could make an across-the-board change.

"What we really need is a cultural change," Dibbert said. "But cultures don't change easily."

The University Editor can be reached at udesk@unc.edu.

## COMMITTEE

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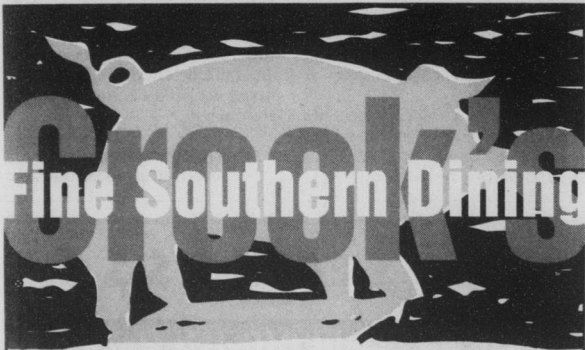
"They should have free lots open around central campus so students can come to campus and study in the library and stuff," he said.

Young said he was disturbed by the way decisions about parking have been made without student input.

"I think it raises a lot of issues of trust on how decisions are made on this campus," he said. "I want to make heard to the administration that this isn't something students will take quietly."

"Regarding Qatar and regarding parking and regarding tuition increases, it's important to acknowledge that the student voice is important and to ignore it is a very big mistake."

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## ADVERTISEMENTS

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council will continue to seek federal aid and grants for alternative fuel research.

"The cause is a good one, but we left the methods were not in line with the values of our community," Bateman said.

Under the proposal, 55 percent of the revenue generated by the advertisements would have been distributed among Chapel Hill, Carrboro and UNC.

But McDuffee said the decision was not an issue of money but rather a question of how to institute better communication between the three parties.

"We need to put in place a different

## RSVVP

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area and the Triangle," Moran said. "A lot of people working in minimum wage jobs are not making the living wage."

Betty Longiotti, chairwoman of the RSVVP program for Carrboro and Chapel Hill, said she is grateful to those restaurants who pledged support this year, despite the decrease in involvement from 105 restaurants last year to 74 this year.

"This year we had 74 restaurants involved," Longiotti said. "I feel that

with the sluggish economy, September 11 and stress from bioterrorist attacks, I think that is a very respectable turnout."

Moran also emphasized that although there are national concerns, people need to stay involved in their communities.

"We want Orange City citizens to pay attention to local economic and social problems," Moran said.

"When people are staying involved locally, they are really helping out on the national level."

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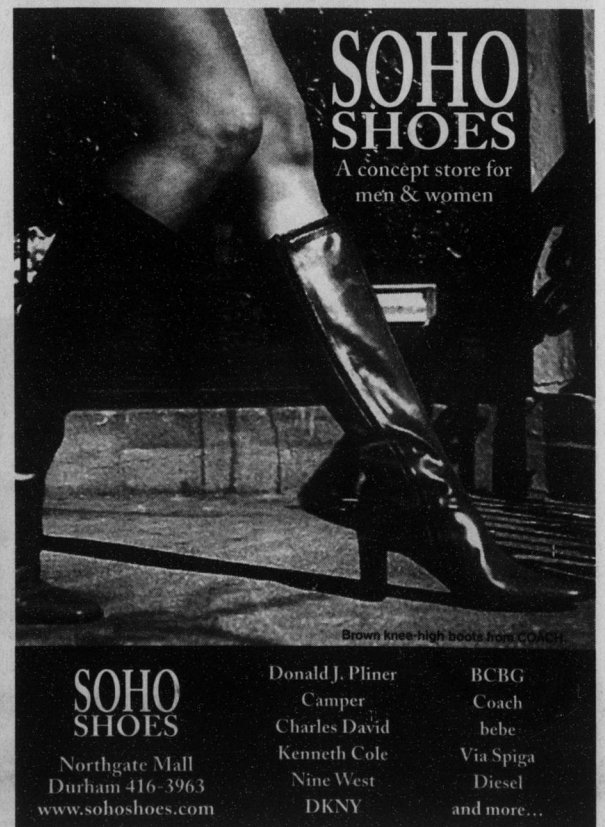
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The UNC Panhellenic Council would like to thank the members of the Fall 2001 Junior Council

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