



FAX MESSAGE

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

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[REDACTED]

FAX COVER SHEET

DATE

[REDACTED]

TO:

[REDACTED]

PHONE:

[REDACTED]

FAX:

[REDACTED]

FROM:

[REDACTED]

Tel:

[REDACTED]

FAX:

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

Re:

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]



CONSULATE OF IRELAND

**REPORT ON BOARD OF ENQUIRY HELD AT THE LAW COURTS,
MALTA ON NOVEMBER 14TH 1996 AT 15.00 HRS.**

**ATTENDED PERSONALLY BY [REDACTED], HON. CONSUL FOR
IRELAND IN MALTA.**

Briefly, the following points emerged as the major ones:-

- 1) A set of photos were exhibited which were taken by the Maltese Chargé d'Affaires in Tunisia. They seemed to indicate that they are photos of the Piper Lance aircraft. Naturally only alleged parts of the plane were shown on the photos together with documents, keys, money etc which were owned by the pilot.
- 2) It also appears that the Tunisian Authorities have been making it very difficult, to put it mildly, for the Maltese Authorities to have access to the actual debris, as well as to the contents that they have allegedly found in an area outside Tunisian Territorial Waters.
- 3) What emerged today as testified by [REDACTED] Permanent Secretary in the Ministry of Transport and Communications, as per letter dated 13th November sent by the Tunisian Authorities is as follows:-
 - a) The Tunisians have finalised their own enquiry and concluded that,
 - the incident occurred in international waters
 - there was no trace of fire on the aircraft, but the plane became a wreck due to water surface shock.
 - That since the plane is registered in Malta the Maltese Authorities are responsible for the Enquiry.
- 4) It appears that the debris is in the possession of the Tunisian Ministry of Interior. The Maltese Authorities have requested on several occasions to be allowed to see the debris but up till today it has been refused. They accepted to allow the Chargé d'Affaires to take the photos, mentioned above.

When asked by [REDACTED] if the identity of the fishermen who allegedly found the debris and items was known, Mr. Mangion replied in the negative. This question was also asked by the Maltese Authorities

[REDACTED]

6) The feeling of the Chairman of the Enquiry is summed up as follows:-

Why are they (the Tunisians) being so difficult, at the same time that they say they want to co-operate" This fact was raised in many a *note verbale*.

The answer given to this point by Malta's Ambassador in Tunisia was

"bureaucracy, centralisation and still very sensitive to the Press".

7) The Board of Enquiry was informed that a Maltese contingent was due to sail to the area indicated by the Tunisians within the next few days with divers and other equipment. The Italian Government have also offered their help since Lampedusa Island is going to be used as a base for the transportation via helicopter to the area indicated by the Tunisian Authorities.

Lastly, the Chairman of the Board of Enquiry emphasised once again the need for immediate clearance by the Tunisian Authorities for the Board of Enquiry to go to Tunisia and carry out all the necessary checks and interrogations. It is vital that this is done as soon as possible.

The Meeting was adjourned *sine die*

[REDACTED]

NEWS

Tunisian inquiry board concludes that

Piper Lance fell headlong into international waters

Tunisian board of inquiry into the disappearance of a light aircraft on its way here from Malta has decided that the plane fell headlong into international waters.

The inquiry has excluded a fire on the plane and believes a pre-examination of the wreckage shows it suffered "a brutal shock with the water surface".

Tunisia has now declared that the opening and conducting of an inquiry is the responsibility of the state of "immatriculation", that is Malta where the plane was registered, and can only deliver assistance.

But the permanent secretary at the Transport Ministry yesterday testified that Tunisia has yet to reply to a request by the local board of inquiry to conduct its examinations there.

Sharon Spiteri

The inquiry has requested to be allowed to travel to Tunisia to "explore all details in further depth" and to examine certain important witnesses and collect all relevant data and documentary material.

It requested "further research and investigation (to help it) appreciate fully all the circumstances of this case".

The permanent secretary, Anthony Mangion, also said Tunisia has not yet given the go-ahead for a copy of the tape registration of the conversation between the pilot and Tunisian air traffic control to be made available to the local inquiry.

The inquiry took a new impetus when parts of the wreckage and the pilot's wallet were

located off the Gulf of Gabes on September 20.

At its last sitting on August 27, the inquiry had reached a stalemate when chairman Dr Philip Sciberras and members Captain Franz Sturmeler and Engineer Louis Gerdmeine said they felt there was not enough evidence to lead it to the facts of the case.

The inquiry yesterday was kept off indefinitely.

The pilot's wallet contained identity card number 297748 (M) and a pilot's card number 4051 belonging to Carmel Bartolo. Inside the wallet were also three bank cards and 11 US and Italian bank notes.

Bartolo was listed missing at the disappearance last December 3 with passengers Matthew Aquilina, Philip Farrugia, Desmond Boomer, Tadeus Gorny and Michael Williams.