
Brazil's Police Rule US Pilots Caused Country's Worst Air Tragedy

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Wednesday, 09 May 2007

Brazil's federal police has finished its investigation on the causes of the worst Brazilian air accident ever, which killed 154 people, after a Boeing collided with an executive Legacy jet piloted by two American, last September.

Roberto Sayão, the police chief in charge of the case is writing his final report, but his conclusion is already known. Sayão has determined that the two American pilots should be blamed for the tragedy.

This information has already been passed to a congressman who is member of a congressional committee investigating the chaotic situation of the Brazilian air space and the turmoil among air controllers, who for the most part are military men.

The investigative committee has decided to hear at least 13 witnesses, among them police chief Sayão.

The revelation about Sayão's conclusion has appeared in a blog maintained by Josias de Souza, a reporter from daily Folha de S. Paulo. The Federal Police inquiry, the journalist reveals, indicate that the two pilots were negligent.

The federal police chief has already decided to recommend to the Public Prosecutor's Office that it file a lawsuit against Joseph Lepore, 42, and Jan Paladino, 34.

According to the federal police inquiry, the American pilots not only disrespected the flight plan putting their small jet in a collision course with the Boeing, but also were negligent for only turning on the transponder - the anti-collision equipment - minutes after the collision between the two planes.

Weren't the Brazilian air controllers also negligent? This is not for me to say, responds Sayão. They are military men and he cannot probe their actions as he was told in no uncertain terms by the military brass. This is the job of the Air Force, he argues.