



Believing that presidential candidate César Gaviria Trujillo would be aboard Avianca Flight 203, on November 27, 1989, Pablo Escobar ordered a bomb to be placed on the plane.

About five minutes after the Boeing 727-21, bearing registration number HK-1803, was in the air, it exploded while flying between Bogota and Cali, Colombia.

The flight took off at its scheduled time—7:11 A.M.—and had reached 13,000 feet. The plane exploded over the town of Soacha, not far from the capital.

What, exactly, caused the plane to crash during a routine thirty-minute flight is still a matter of debate. Witnesses say there were two explosions. What caused those?

The most-likely scenario, according to aviation-forensic experts, is that a bomb (perhaps placed under seat 15F on the starboard side of the aircraft) detonated on board the plane. That event likely punctured the Center-Wing Tank (CWT), igniting fuel vapors in the CWT (which was otherwise empty) and causing a second explosion.

The second explosion led to the crash.

The tail section, which went down in flames, separated from the nose section. All 107 people on board the flight died. So did three people on the ground who were struck by the falling debris.

Escobar's target—César Gaviria Trujillo—was not on the flight. Reportedly, he changed his plans not long before the scheduled departure (and went on to become Colombia's President).

Among the victims were two Americans.

Not only did Escobar miss his target, his actions caused the Bush Administration to initiate Intelligence Support Activity operations to help the Colombian government find, and prosecute, Escobar.

Later ... Dandeny Muñoz Mosquera, one of Escobar's assassins working for the Medellín Cartel, was charged with the crime. How did that come about?

Earlier convicted for traveling in America on a fake passport, and sentenced to six years for that crime, Mosquera was in prison when he was charged with actions causing the Avianca disaster.

Convicted in a United States District Court, for that additional crime, he was sentenced again—to ten consecutive life sentences, plus 45 years.

Pablo's brazen actions, in targeting and assassinating would-be Colombian presidents, hardened the resolve of government officials to bring him to justice.

Escobar, however, remained free ... at least for a time.

Credits:

Photo of a soldier guarding the remains of Avianca Flight 203 by El Espectado. Online via Colombia Reports.

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