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LAW ENFORCEMENT

# FBI: Early probe results show 18 hijackers took part

September 13, 2001

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The probe is complicated by the fact that the hijackers died with their victims. Authorities have not yet recovered any of the black boxes from the downed jets. Speaking to CNN Thursday, Ashcroft reiterated President Bush in calling the disasters "acts of war," and vowed to find the perpetrators. "I'm not able to identify any one responsible party for you today," Ashcroft said. "I would say that we are making progress in this investigation and following and developing an understanding of the kinds of associations that the individuals who perpetrated these act of war had." Ashcroft said "... between three and six individuals on each of the hijacked airplanes were involved. We know that they were trained and technically proficient, that they were trained in the United States to fly, some of them at least, to fly these airplanes, and they flew them with deadly accuracy." Ashcroft said that as of Thursday morning the U.S. government had received 2,055 tips through a hot line number and more than 22,700 tips on a Web site dedicated to the investigation. The hotline number is 1-866-483-5137. Investigators searching the wreckage of United Airlines Flight 93 in western Pennsylvania said Thursday they had not found the plane's flight data and cockpit voice recorders. FBI agent Bill Crowley said the grid-by-grid search of the crash site would continue and that he was confident the recorders would be located. Authorities also said another debris site had been cordoned off six to eight miles away from the original crash debris site. The National Transportation Safety Board said United Airlines Flight 93 was heading eastward when it crashed in Somerset County.

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FBI officials leading the investigation said it could take weeks to recover everything from the crash site. Crowley said archaeologists have been brought in to search the impact crater, which has been covered by a layer of dust.

The FBI questioned individuals in Boston, Massachusetts -- where two of the hijacked flights originated -- and Florida, where some of the suspect hijackers had apparently lived and attended flight schools there.

In Boston, agents detained three men Wednesday for questioning, but released them later in the day.

In Florida, more than 400 federal agents were put on the investigation. Several men were being investigated as suspects in the terrorist attacks after searching homes and rental car documents and poring over flight school student records across the state.

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