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## FBI ends site work, says no bomb used

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By Tom Gibb, Post-Gazette Staff Writer

STONYCREEK, Pa. -- The FBI said yesterday that it has finished its work at the crash scene of United Flight 93 after recovering about 95 percent of the downed airliner and concluding that explosives were not responsible for bringing it down.

At the same time, the Somerset County coroner said that he has ended his own search for remains of the 44 people aboard the airliner.

"It's been very thorough," Coroner Wallace Miller said of the recovery effort.

Now, the probe of the Sept. 11 crash is in the hands of investigators examining the jet's so-called black boxes for a better sense of what happened during the hijacking.

In the meantime, Miller will oversee the task of matching remains with the names of people aboard the jetliner. So far, doctors, dentists and forensic scientists have made 11 matches.

"I don't think it's appropriate to say with certainty that we can identify all the individuals on board," Miller told reporters yesterday.

The inventory of jetliner debris gives testimony to the devastation of the Boeing 757 when it hit a Somerset County field at somewhere between 400 and 580 mph, the last of four domestic flights to crash that morning after being seized by terrorists.

FBI spokesman Bill Crowley said that the largest piece of plane recovered was a shred of fuselage skin that covered four windows -- a piece seven feet long from a jetliner that was 155 feet long.

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The heaviest piece, he said, was a half-ton section of engine fan.

The jetliner exploded in a fireball, witnesses said -- but not a fireball caused by a bomb, according to Crowley.

"The conclusion of the investigation is that no explosives were used on board the plane," Crowley said yesterday. He would not elaborate further.

At least two passengers aboard Flight 93 made calls from the plane after it was hijacked and said they believed one of the hijackers was carrying a bomb.

Of the airliner parts, the pieces that investigators judged most significant were the plane's cockpit voice recorder and flight data recorder, both unearthed within 3 1/2 days of the crash. The voice recording that remained is being analyzed for clues to confirm the identities of the four hijackers who seized the Newark-to-San Francisco flight before it crashed.

But whether investigators can ever establish a DNA link that would firmly identify the hijackers is uncertain, Miller said, because investigators don't know if they have a data base which would identify any of the terrorists by DNA.

Passengers probably tried to overwhelm the air pirates, Attorney General John Ashcroft has said.

Since it had no more use for it, the FBI turned the airliner debris -- but not the data and voice recorders -- over to United Airlines yesterday. Asked what United will do with the debris, airline spokeswoman Whitney Staley said, "I don't think a decision has been made ... but we're not commenting."

Through Friday, the crash site had been alive with recovery workers clad in protective suits to shield them from airline fuel and biological hazards posed by human remains. Yesterday, the site was silent, a crater surrounded by mounds of excavated soil, bordered by trees into which debris had rocketed.

As many as 1,500 people worked at the recovery site or out of the command post, a small village of trailers on the bluff above. By midday yesterday, most had filtered out and state police -- who watched over the surrounding roads with an army of 400 troopers, 16 mounted police officers and three helicopters -- pulled back into a smaller security zone.

Miller said his own search for remains ended Sunday, with the highest degree of certainty he could muster.

"We've been as thorough as we possibly can ... but we're not naive enough to think that we've gotten everything," Miller said.

He said that the remains of 11 of the 44 people aboard the jetliner have been identified through fingerprints and dental records. Among the tasks left for Miller is to get DNA identification of the remains of the other 33 passengers and crew.

DNA also will be used to verify the findings for the 11 people already identified

His other job, Miller said, is to work with United at returning the crash scene to the way it looked before the airliner went down. That work that could be a prelude to a permanent memorial at the site.

For now, though, it will be a crash scene surrounded by a chain-link fence and posted with no-trespassing signs.

"If anybody is caught penetrating that perimeter and disregarding those signs, they will be prosecuted to the fullest extent of the law," Miller warned.

Yesterday morning, state troopers arrested the seventh person they have caught trying to get onto the site, state police Capt. Frank Monaco said.

President Bush met yesterday at the White House with about 50 relatives of Flight 93 victims.

Officials turned the focus from the site yesterday after bidding thanks to support that ranged from the American Red Cross and Salvation Army to the commonwealth and troops of volunteer firefighters.

"We had phones. We had ATVs," Crowley said. "Virtually anything we requested, we got in triplicate."

This region -- which decked itself in American flags and yellow ribbons -- never finished throwing in its support. It was charity that ranged from mountains of food donated at the Shanksville Volunteer Fire Co. for recovery workers to local resident Nang Coslic, who cooked meals nightly for the state troopers guarding the road outside her house.

Recovery teams initially said that the FBI investigation could go on for up to five weeks. Instead, the FBI officially ended its investigation of the crash scene late Saturday afternoon, 12 days after the probe began.

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