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Judge OKs certificates of death in Flight 93

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By Tom Gibb Post-Gazette Staff Writer

Everyone who died aboard United Airlines Flight 93 except the terrorists who hijacked it will get death certificates under a ruling issued yesterday by a Somerset County judge.

At the insistence of the FBI, the terrorists won't be getting them because investigators aren't sure of their identities.

To date, the remains of 20 of the 44 people who were aboard the airliner have been identified, allowing the county coroner to issue death certificates for them. Yesterday, Common Pleas Judge Kim R. Gibson approved county Coroner Wallace Miller's request to issue death certificates for another 20 people without their remains being identified.

The decision allows the victims' families to more easily deal with settling estates, collecting death benefits and gaining access to bank accounts, county Solicitor Daniel Rullo said yesterday.

Flight 93, bound for San Francisco from Newark, N.J., had two pilots, five flight attendants and 37 passengers aboard when it crashed in Stonycreek. Four were hijackers who seized control of the Boeing 757 as it approached Cleveland; they were possibly diverting the plane to Washington, D.C., when a battle for control of the airliner took place with the other passengers, federal investigators say.

The names of the hijackers have been given as Ziad Samir Jarrah, Ahmed Alnami, Ahmed Ibrahim Al Haznawi and Saeed Alghamdi, but the FBI is not confident enough of their identities to have death certificates issued for them, Rullo said.


"The FBI indicated that they might have used false identifications to get their airline tickets," he said.

In the meantime, the identification of remains continues. The first dozen matches were made through use of dental records and



fingerprints. The rest have come through DNA testing.

Some next of kin have asked for remains to be returned and some have asked the coroner to handle interment. Remains never identified could be buried at the crash site as part of a memorial that is being planned, county Commissioner Brad Cober said yesterday.

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