

CP FLIGHT 21 - JULY 8, 1965

"Mayday! Mayday! Mayday!"

This is what was heard over the radio on the afternoon of Thursday, July 8, 1965.

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At 2:42 pm, Canadian Pacific Air Lines Flight 21, registration CF-CUQ, took off from Vancouver International Airport. The plane was captained by Capt. John Steele and crewed by 5 other crew members. At the time of take off there were 46 passengers aboard the flight.

The flight was meant to fly through a series of remote northern towns, the first stop being Prince George followed by Fort St. John, Fort Nelson, and Watson Lake. The flight would have concluded with its final stop in Whitehorse, Yukon.

For the first 45 minutes of the journey, everything was normal. The plane followed the planned flight path before having to alter the course slightly in order to minimize turbulence.

It was at 3:40, only an hour after departing from Vancouver, that the trip had taken a turn for the worse.

"Mayday! Mayday! Mayday!"

This is the message that air traffic control heard over the radio from CP Flight 21.

As the message was being heard over the radio, onlookers witnessed the horrors from down below. They watched as the tail of the plane detached and flew to the sky, as debris and small dots, which witnesses later learned were passengers from the plane being sucked out of the plane, flew out of the aircraft, and crashed in the ground below.

There were no survivors from Flight 21.

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During the investigation, traces of potassium nitrate and carbon were found in the wreckage. These are the ingredients of gunpowder and stumping powder. The traces were found near the aircraft's rear lavatory, along with pieces of shrapnel that were buried everywhere. There was evidence of pre-crash damage

to the pipes and bulkhead, along with the hole in the side of the fuselage. These pieces of evidence lead investigators to discover that what they were dealing with was no longer an accident, but a mass murder.

THE SUSPECTS

In 1965, it was easy for passengers to bring weapons and explosives onto airplanes. Security checkpoints hadn't been established until the early 70's due to an increase in hijackings. All passengers had to do was check in, walk to their gate, and board their flight.

There were only four main suspects during the investigation of Flight 21.

Douglas Edgar a 40-year-old gambler who purchased \$125,000 worth of flight insurance right before his flight (that's \$1.2 million in 2024). He named his wife, daughter, and niece as the beneficiaries if he were to pass away. He was meant to be headed to Prince George, claiming to have received a job at a pulp mill there. However, when the RCMP were conducting their investigation, none of the pulp mills had hired the man or even heard of him.

Stefan Kolezar was a 53-year-old passenger with extensive knowledge and experience of working with explosives and a history of violence. Kolezar had been arrested and charged with manslaughter in 1958 and had been known to be extremely violent at times. He had been on the flight with a ticket purchased by a rock excavating company.

Peter Broughton a 29-year-old introvert with a hobby for guns. Broughton was investigated by the RCMP for his hobby in guns and reloading ammunitions. He owned a considerable amount of gunpowder, the powder used to blow up Flight 21. Four of his 11-ounce tins were missing from his collection and couldn't be accounted for.

Paul Vander Meulen a 35-year-old ex-member of the Army Airforce. Vander Meulen had a failed water softener company and owned a .44 Magnum that he had brought onto the plane with him. He had also been seeing a psychiatrist who describe him as having a "deep madness towards the world." Vander Meulen also purchased life insurance 2 months before his trip on Flight 21. During his X-rays after the crash, he was found with blasting caps embedded in his body. Investigators believe he was sitting near the rear lavatory where the explosion originated.

After nearly 60 years, investigators have been unable to uncover who the bomber of CP Flight 21, one of Canada's largest unsolved mass murders. The wreckage of the aircraft still sits in the British Columbian woods. Members of the victims' families have left mementos for their loved ones, and many go to the wreckage to pay their respects. Maybe one day the mystery of who brought down Flight 21 will finally be solved.

Directions to the Crash Site

Coordinates: 51° 36' 46.00" N / 121° 46' 164" W

Starting Point: South Cariboo Visitor Centre

Head North on highway 97, turning onto Exeter Road. Continue down this road (which turns into the 1100 Rd) and follow the signs to the EDUCO Camp.

Go past the EDUCO Camp which is between kilometer markers #14 and #15. Continue past the cattleguard marked kilometer #19 until you reach a fork in the road. Here you will turn right onto Gustafsen God Creek FSR (11-20 Rd/ 1100 Rd)

Stay on this road and look for the kilometer markers. When you pass kilometer marker #34 there is a small road on you left. This is where you will want to park your vehicle and continue on foot (Unless you have a high clearance vehicle or off roading vehicles like an ATV). From this point you may begin to see yellow signs leading you to the crash site.

Follow the small road until you reach a fork in the road, you will go to the left. There is a swamp area and a hill, walk up the hill and at the top of this hill the trail forks. At this point there are signs leading you to the different crash site areas. Follow the directions on the signs.



