



Health Agency (NYSDOH) Cited in TWA Flight 800 Crash

As the twentieth anniversary of the TWA Flight 800 crash is observed, lessons are learned on emergency healthcare in aviation disasters.

NEW YORK, NY, UNITED STATES, June 26, 2016 /EINPresswire.com/ -- On July 17, 1996, TWA Flight 800 bound for Paris and Rome crashed off New York's Long Island southern shores. All two hundred-thirty occupants perished. The National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB) said that a central fuel tank had exploded. At this twenty-year anniversary observance, however, many questions remain.

Victims came from numerous nations, and families from the world over gathered at Kennedy Airport. On board were forty-eight French nationals. Official physician for New York's French consulate, Gérard Sunnen, MD, was immediately dispatched to assist French families.

Coordinator of medical and mental health services and consular envoy, Dr. Sunnen repeatedly contacted the New York State Department of Health (NYSDOH) to lend its assistance to families in need. The NYSDOH, however, never answered the requests. He stated, "No one seems to be able to explain why New York State's health agency refused to help Flight 800's French families. Thankfully, international guidelines are now in place. The 1996 Federal Aviation Disaster Family Assistance Act mandates a broad range of governmental assistance to victims and families impacted by aviation disasters. Complaints have been filed with NTSB and the European Aviation Organization (EAO) to prevent repeat scenarios."

"This incident," Dr. Sunnen continues, "was a precursor to others. In 2003, following Iraq war's onset, the NYSDOH again refused to assist as virulent anti-French boycotts swept New York, leading to bankruptcies of many French-American businesses and numerous medical and mental health consequences. One only needs to Google "France and New York boycotts," or "Freedom Fries" to fully appreciate the health and welfare aftermath of these destructive events. Strangely, New York was the only U.S. city where anti-French boycotts materialized."

Nonetheless, Dr. Sunnen received official recognition for his services. Rights violations are now filed with the New York State Division for Human Rights (NYSDHR), and HHS's Office of Civil Rights. Dr. Sunnen, who is also a U.S. veteran concluded, "In these times of rising polarization, friends and allies need to solidify their cooperative efforts, and there is nowhere better to start than with actively nurturing international medical fellowship and goodwill."

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Federal No. 16GB602636

HHS-OCR Case No.16-234461

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