WASHINGTON (AP)—Federal investigators are trying to determine how a Continental Airlines passenger jet ended up carrying seven oxygen canisters in its cargo hold, a practice outlawed following last year’s ValuJet crash.

“We take this very seriously and we’re investigating it thoroughly,” Eliot Brenner, a spokesman for the National Transportation Safety Board, said Tuesday.

The oxygen generators, secured by safety caps, were in a shipment of airline materials found by Continental workers 10 days after the flight to Houston from Los Angeles.

“If the caps, they were not in danger of going off,” Brenner said. The canisters were not listed as part of the shipment, he said.

The FAA reported the flight took place on April 15, but the airline said it was a day later.

Chemical oxygen generators were banned as cargo in passenger planes shortly after ValuJet Flight 592 crashed into the Florida Everglades, killing all 100 people on board. Investigators determined that the disaster resulted from a fire fueled by poorly packaged oxygen generators.

Air transport of the generators is now restricted to compartments in cargo planes that the crew can reach during the flight.

Based on that assurance, Hallett said, the airlines decided to go ahead with the program.

The project covers the cargo containers beneath passenger compartments, used to carry luggage. These so-called “Type D” compartments are sealed and airplanes have assumed that any fire that broke out would be extinguished by lack of oxygen. In the ValuJet case, the oxygen generators helped fuel the blaze.

The ATA announcement comes just a day after disclosure that similar banned oxygen cylinders were recently carried aboard a Continental jet.

The generators, secured by safety caps, were in a shipment of airline materials found by Continental workers 10 days after the flight to Houston from Los Angeles. There was no fire in this case.

STOP THE SCOURGE OF LANDMINES

(Mr. McGOVERN asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks and include extraneous material.)

Mr. McGOVERN. Mr. Speaker, I rise this morning to ask my colleagues and the President to support an immediate and complete ban on antipersonnel land mines.

According to the Department of State, a limb or a life is lost every 22 minutes as a result of land mines. Over 5 million land mines are produced annually. Over 50 percent of them are deployed in civilians. In 70 countries around the world, more than 100 million land mines continue to fight battles that ended long after hostilities have ceased, continuing to cause casualties among innocent people, especially farmers and children.

We understand that there are 100 million land mines deployed in the world. Their presence makes normal life impossible in scores of nations. It will take decades of slow, dangerous and painstaking work to remove these mines. The cost in dollars and human lives will be immense. Seventy people will be killed or maimed today, 500 this week, more than 2,000 this month, and more than 26,000 this year, because of landmines.

Given the wide range of weaponry available to military forces today, antipersonnel landmines are not essential. Thus, banning them would not undermine the military effectiveness or safety of our forces, nor those of other nations.

The proposed ban on antipersonnel land mines does not affect antitank mines, nor does it ban such normally command-detona ted weapons as Claymore “mines,” leaving unimproved the use of those undeniably militarily useful weapons.

Nor is the ban on antipersonnel landmines a slippery slope that would open the way to efforts to ban additional forms of weapons, since these mines are unique in their indiscriminate, harmful residual potential.


The proposed ban on antipersonnel landmines is a necessary, humane and sensible step in the right direction. It is long overdue.

We strongly urge that you have announced a United States goal of the eventual elimination of antipersonnel landmines. We take this to mean that you support a permanent and total international ban on the production, stockpiling, sale and use of this weapon.

We view such a ban as not only humane, but also militarily responsible.

The rationale for opposing antipersonnel landmines is that they are in a category similar to poison gas; they are hard to control, and often have unpredictable consequences (sometimes even for those who employ them). In addition, they are insidious in that their indiscriminate effects persist long after hostilities have ceased, continuing to cause casualties among innocent people, especially farmers and children.

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Treaty was a 23-year proposition: 20 years to establish the terms of the negotiations, and 3 years to negotiate the treaty itself. Such timetables are absolutely unacceptable when dealing with a humanitarian disaster like landmines. Even if the CD were to move at its fastest pace, landmines will claim hundreds of thousands of new victims during its years of negotiation.

The Ottawa process, in contrast, is moving forward at a very brisk pace and has garnered significant international support in the six months since Canadian Foreign Minister Lloyd Axworthy announced that Ottawa would host a treaty signing for a comprehensive ban on landmine use, production, stockpiling, and export. A total of 67 nations (including 66 of the 76 NATO) have indicated their support for the treaty and the Ottawa process. Nine core nations (Germany, Austria, South Africa, the Philippines, Mexico, Switzerland, France, Russia, and China) is the only means of bringing them aboard.

The U.S. Campaign to Ban Landmines is concerned about such governments’ participation, but believes that the Ottawa process offers the best means of putting pressure on them to eventually support a comprehensive ban. The treaty, as set for December of this year, will indicate very clearly those governments who are the troublemakers and abusers of this cruel and inhumane weapon. The large numbers of countries which will adopt a ban at that time will set an international norm on antipersonnel landmines, and they will help stigmatize and isolate those who refuse to join.

Interestingly, when Secretary of State Madeleine Albright testified in favor of U.S. ratification of the Chemical Weapons Treaty on April 8, she asked this key question: “Even if the United States joins the CWB, other countries will not necessarily adopt the problem states will never accept a prohibition on chemical weapons if America stays out, keeps them company and gives them cover. We will not have the standing to mobilize our allies to support strong action against violators if we ourselves have refused to join the treaty being violated.”

The U.S. Campaign to Ban Landmines has no principled objection to the Conference on Disarmament, but the very vulture that the Conference is such that negotiations are long past and it is time for deliberations, particularly when dealing with weapons (such as chemical or biological warfare) which are not in use is one thing. But when negotiating an international agreement on casualties, or the number of antipersonnel landmines per year, such a process is a disaster. If it took as long to consummate a ban on landmines as it did to achieve ratification of the Chemical Weapons Convention, millions of people would be injured or disabled. And another 5,598,000 victims (assuming current levels of civilian casualties.) This is an unacceptable proposition. There is no reason that countries would refuse to adopt a ban at the CD should prevent them from joining the Ottawa initiative today.

Mr. Geir Lundestad,
Director, The Norwegian Nobel Committee.

Dr. Geir Lundestad, The Nobel Peace Prize, the International Campaign to Ban Landmines (ICBL) and its Campaign Director, Geir L. Williams.

The ICBL was initiated at the end of 1991 by Ms. Williams for the Vietnam Veterans of America Foundation, the International Committee of the Red Cross, the International Committee against Medical Interference, and the Norwegian Nobel Committee. It is the only means of bringing them aboard.

The Clinton Administration has decided its first step toward a ban at the Conference on Disarmament on the grounds that an international ban on certain types of a landmines ban, such as Russia and China, is the only means of bringing them aboard.

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banned or suspended their use, and 20 have announced no production.

In 1996, the UN General Assembly passed by a vote of 156-0, with 10 abstentions, a resolution calling upon states "to pursue vigorously" an international treaty banning APMs "as soon as possible." The world now boasts two "mine-free zones"—Central America and South America declared by its six Foreign Ministers to ban the weapon throughout the region, and the CARICOM states. Additionally, both the OAS and the OAU have passed resolutions calling upon their member states to make their regions mine-free.

This momentum has also brought other change. After the report from the ICBL, the 1980 Convention on Conventional Weapons (CCW) was reviewed from 1994–96. The two previous order of the House, the gentleman from Wisconsin [Mr. NEUMANN] is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. NEUMANN addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.

COMMENDING THE WHITNEY M. YOUNG HIGH SCHOOL OF CHICAGO FOR ITS ACADEMIC EXCELLENCE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Illinois [Mr. DAVIS] is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. DAVIS of Illinois. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to pay tribute to a group of superstars in the Seventh Congressional District in the State of Illinois. Often when we talk about superstars it is in the context of athletics, athletes, entertainers, television personalities, such as Michael Jordan, O.J. Simpson, and Winfrey, the Bulls, and I am very proud that I represent all of them. It would be impossible to argue that Michael Jordan, the leader of the Chicago Bulls, based in the Seventh District of Illinois, the most popular man in the country, with his amazing agility and ball handling skills, is anything but a superstar or that Scottie Pippin, who grew up in a little town in Arkansas not very far from my original home, he in Hamburg and I in Parkdale, Scottie is indeed a superstar, and I am proud to represent him. Likewise, Kevin Garnett, who also lived in the Seventh District, attended Farragut High School and went directly into the National Basketball Association with the Minnesota Timberwolves based upon his exceptional ability to master the game of basketball.

But what about our academic superstars who have proven themselves capable of their ability and with their ability to master the quest for knowledge? So tonight, Mr. Speaker, I come to talk about another group of superstars. For the past 8 years the Whitney M. Young High School's Academic Decathlon teams have been superstars in the national competition. They are the Michael Jordans and Scottie Pippins of education. The decathlon team's mental ability and problem solving skills have placed them in the top 10 in the United States Academic Decathlon's national competition 8 consecutive times, winning third place three times and second place once when the decathlon was held in Chicago in 1995. Whitney Young's most recent team placed third in the 1997 U.S. Academic Decathlon's national competition. Eight consecutive times, winning third place three times and second place once when the decathlon was held in Chicago in 1995. Whitney Young's most recent team placed third in the 1997 U.S. Academic Decathlon's national competition.

Therefore, I commend and congratulate the Outstanding Academic Decathlon participants. I congratulate Mr. Jody Kenner; Mr. Billy Williams, chairman; Mr. Paul Levin, vice chair; Ms. Susan Hirsch, recording secretary; Ms. Anita Andrews, Mr. Miguel Ayala, Ms. Mary Baldwin, Ms. Estrelita Ayala, Ms. Barbara Keys, Ms. Martha Miller, and Ms. Deborah Sawyer, all members of the local advisory council.

Mr. Speaker, making the final three in the U.S. Academic Decathlon is no small feat. The decathlon takes months and even years of hard work and preparation. The Academic Decathlon is the supreme measure of educational achievement. It is the World Series of academics. It is the NBA finals of scholastic athletics.

So again we salute Whitney M. Young, all of the members of the team. I congratulate each and every one of the outstanding young men and women who represent the Chicago Board of Education, the local advisory council, the principal and a great staff. It does indeed take a whole community to make a great school.

INTERNATIONAL LEGAL ISSUE HAS BEEN LINGERING TOO LONG

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Georgia [Mr. LINDER] is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. LINDER. Mr. Speaker, I bring to the attention of this body an international legal issue of expropriation that has been lingering since the early 1980's, but began off the coast of Colombia and well over 200 years ago. It is a tale of buried treasure that has resulted in the foreign defiance of accepted property rights in salvage laws at the expense of an American company.

By way of background, after encountering an enemy British fleet, the Spanish galleon San Jose was sunk with a treasure estimated at over $2 billion in today's value. The San Jose and its treasure remained hidden at the bottom of the ocean for hundreds of years, until a United States company—known today as San Jose Search Armada—discovered the wreck of the San Jose. Under recognized international salvage and admiralty laws, the discoverer of this find has the right to salvage the...