



## **Pilots to stay put for probe of Brazil crash**

**Officials want LI airmen, plane to remain in country until midair collision that downed jet is fully investigated**

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The full investigation of a midair collision over the Amazon jungle 10 days ago should take two months to complete, according to Brazilian authorities.

And while the probe continues, officials want to keep the two American pilots as well as the Legacy executive jet they were flying in the country.

Renato Sayao, chief deputy of the national police, who is in charge of the federal investigation, told a newspaper, The State, that Joseph Lepore, 42, of Bay Shore, and Jan Paladino, 34, of Westhampton Beach, should not be allowed to leave.

He said the inquiry should take two months because "it's not a difficult investigation from the police point of view. There's very few proceedings involved. The complexity is in the analysis of the technical results."

Meanwhile, Justice Joao Mariozi of the Federal Supreme Court issued a temporary order Saturday preventing the damaged Legacy jet from being removed from the country.

The preliminary investigation into the cause of the collision that killed 154 on a Brazilian commercial flight is expected to be completed this week and revealed to the victims' families.

In a weekend of numerous revelations about the crash, The State also reported that aviation officials had determined that the Legacy, owned by ExcelAire of Ronkonkoma, had flown underneath Gol Airlines Flight 1907 at 37,000 feet and cut off part of the right wing and a stabilizer of the larger Boeing jet. That would explain why the plane nosedived in a spiral, taking 2 1/2 minutes to reach the ground.

The State also reported that Jose Carlos Dias, a former national justice minister serving as the lawyer for the American pilots, believes the confiscation of their passports by Brazilian authorities is illegal.

But the attorney said he won't challenge the ruling by a state judge.

Instead, Dias wants to set up an interview this week for his clients with Sayao. Dias said he wants to show that the pilots are willing to cooperate. "They will tell everything that happened," he told the newspaper. "There's nothing to hide."

Luiz Carlos Bueno, commander of the national civil aviation agency Aeronáutica, said the black box from the Legacy jet, built by Embraer in Brazil, is being sent to the International Civil Aviation Organization in Canada for evaluation.

The same agency is examining the black box recovered from the crashed Boeing airplane so that, for impartiality, the evaluation will not be done in either Brazil or the United States. Bueno said the investigation would not be rushed because "it has to be the most perfect possible."

Officials at Aeronáutica told The State the ExcelAire jet did not respond to five calls from controllers in Brasilia and two from Manaus, and the transponder in the jet was not connected to the plane's black box.

They said it was not clear whether the pilots disconnected it or it was never connected properly by Embraer before the new plane's maiden flight.

When word reached Brazil that three Long Island congressman were asking diplomats to work to allow the pilots to leave the country, Waldir Pires, the defense minister, declared that international pressure would not interfere with the investigation.

"We are all mobilized to stop it," he said. "It is not a problem of this or that government. This is of interest to all of us, the world citizens who travel by plane."

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