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The Black Stone Remembers Athens Airport Massacre of August 1973: Thirty-Fifth Anniversary of the Attack

Nearly 35 years ago, on August 5, 1973, two gunmen from the Palestinian terrorist group Black September attacked passengers bound for New York on a TWA flight at the Athens Airport, using machine guns and grenades. Three Americans died and 55 were wounded. The gunmen held 35 passengers hostage for more than two hours before surrendering to police.

Little more than three months earlier, author Linda Cargill had landed at the Athens Airport for a visit with a group of seniors from her suburban Pittsburgh high school. Cargill, the author of *The Black Stone*, a novel about the next 9/11, recalls, "It could have been me. One of the Americans who died was a teenage girl. She was only sixteen years old. I was eighteen at the time. I immediately identified with her. That was one of the reasons I wrote the novel."

Cargill also acknowledges that the account in the novel of a 1973 visit to Athens by the heroine's mother, Lucinda, is largely autobiographical. "Look, that picture of me you have up on the [Cheops Books] website as Lucinda in Greece. That's me! I was standing there on that Greek island in my tennis shoes and white London fog raincoat with a bandanna blowing in the breeze, feeling nervous. I look as if I really do see a terrorist lurking about."

Apparently no one had warned the author before she embarked on the ten-day high school trip to Greece that Americans weren't wanted there, that it was dangerous. "I don't think my parents knew either," she says. "Neither did the chaperone from the high school. I'm sure of that. But isn't that typical of Americans. They walk into danger, and they aren't even aware of it. The Athens Airport Massacre was sort of like a mini-9/11."

In researching her book, the author discovered many other terrorist incidents involving Americans, both minor and major, going back as far as the sinking of the *Lusitania* on May 7, 1915. "That is, if you want to consider that a terrorist incident. It depends upon how you define it," the author explains. "After all, the Germans attacked a ship full of innocent civilians. But I'm saving that one for my next book, *2014*. And we don't understand everything that happened. There was a second, mysterious explosion after the liner was torpedoed."

Another terrorist incident occurred on April 3, 1986, when four people were killed after a bomb blew a hole in the fuselage of a TWA flight as it approached Athens. On November 14, 1995, a bomb planted by what some believe to be al-Qaeda inspired militants killed four Americans in Saudi Arabia. Both of these events are featured in *The Black Stone*.

"But finding out about the Athens Airport Massacre happening so close to the time I was in Greece was like throwing me a curve ball. It really got me angry," says Cargill. "That's why I dedicated *The Black Stone* to the three Americans killed that day – Jeanne Salandri, Laura Kay Haack, and Elbert Kersing."

The Black Stone is available in hardback for \$26.95 and in paperback for \$19.95 in most bookstores or by calling BCH Fulfillment & Distribution at 1-800-431-1579.

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