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Leslianne Shedd

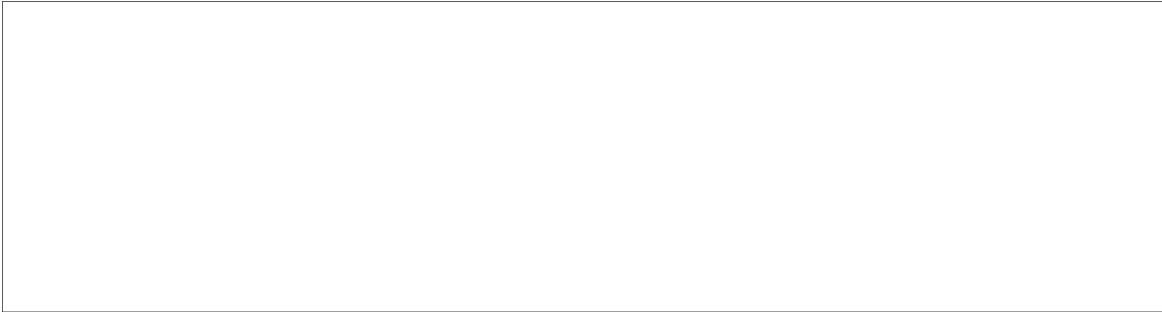
[redacted] - 23 November 1996

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(Insert photo Leslianne Shedd)
Directorate of Operations
Operations Officer
GS-11

(S) Leslianne Shedd, a CIA operations officer serving in [redacted] was killed on 23 November 1996 when her hijacked Ethiopian Airlines plane crashed in the Indian Ocean near the Comoro Islands.

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(S) Leslianne Shedd began working at the Central Intelligence Agency in February 1991. She received extensive training in operations and completed the Career Training (CT) Program [redacted] in 1992. Her CT training included an interim assignment in the Operations Directorate's Africa Division, where she was responsible for operational support [redacted]. Her first assignment was at Headquarters in the Operations Directorate's Africa Division, [redacted] where she served as the desk officer [redacted]. She prepared outgoing correspondence [redacted]. By the spring of 1993 she had also completed six months of French language training [redacted].

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(S) In July 1993, Leslianne began a two-year tour as a GS-09 [redacted] operations officer [redacted]. As a first-tour officer she impressed her colleagues and managers with her imaginative developmental work, including risky but successful recruitment efforts [redacted]. All of this added up to a highly successful first tour.

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(S) Leslianne's second overseas tour was [redacted] in the summer of 1995, where she served as a GS-10 operations officer. This was one of Africa Division's most active [redacted]. [redacted] she (and her co-workers) had to operate with a heightened sense of personal and operational security. They faced serious threats from internal opposition groups. Leslianne appeared undaunted by all this.

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(S) [redacted] She was promoted to GS-11 in August 1995. By all accounts, her tour [redacted] was very successful. It included significant success in developing and recruiting agents, some of whom provided critical information [redacted].

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(S) Following her death, [redacted] highlighted her fun-loving spirit, and brilliant use of precise, pointed language in cables. The Chief of Africa Division praised Leslianne's courageous efforts against terrorist targets in Africa. He also noted that she was slated to pursue a Master's degree in international finance so that she could track terrorist funding.

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(S) Leslianne Shedd was killed on 23 November 1996. She was a passenger on a hijacked Ethiopian Airlines plane that crashed in the Indian Ocean near the Comoro Islands. Flight 961 was about to take off from Addis Ababa when several apparently intoxicated Ethiopians boarded the plane and demanded that it

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be flown to Australia. The hijackers ignored the pilot's repeated claim that the plane needed to refuel. Several hours later, during an emergency-landing attempt at Moroni, the capital of the Comoro Islands, the plane ran out of fuel and crashed into the ocean near a beach resort.

(U) That ill-fated flight was the first leg of what was to have been a Thanksgiving holiday in East Africa for Leslieanne Shedd and several friends. About an hour into the flight, a hijacking was announced. Leslieanne and her companions were seated in the economy class section toward the rear of the aircraft; the terrorists tended to concentrate near the cockpit. As a result, the group got no more than a brief glimpse of the hijackers.

(U) No panic occurred; everyone remained calm. About three hours later the pilot announced that he was about to attempt a crash landing in the Indian Ocean and that passengers should put on their life preservers. The plane headed toward the water at 150 mph. Leslieanne did not panic. From her window seat, she assisted her friends sitting beside her. She then spotted an elderly Ethiopian woman fumbling with her life jacket. Leslieanne unbuckled her own seatbelt, stood up, and helped the woman. She then sat down and tried to calm her seatmate [redacted]. Just before the plane hit the water, Leslieanne turned to her friend and said, "it's going to be okay [redacted] it's going to be okay. We're in the safest part of the plane. The best part of the plane. It'll be okay."

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(U) [redacted] who survived the crash, could only remember being under what she estimated as some 20 feet of water. The next thing she recalls is being on the surface, with no sign of Leslieanne. [redacted] made it to shore, but because of head trauma, was nearly unconscious for two days.¹

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(S) Leslieanne Shedd was survived by her mother, father, sister, and brother. She was 28 years old. Leslieanne was posthumously awarded the Agency's Exceptional Service medallion.²

¹ (S) The story of Leslieanne's actions during the hijacking and plane crash were the result of a telephone call from a hospital in Port Louis between [redacted] and an Agency officer.

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²(S) For additional perspectives on Leslieanne Shedd's life please refer to What's News at CIA, December 10, 1996, [redacted]

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