

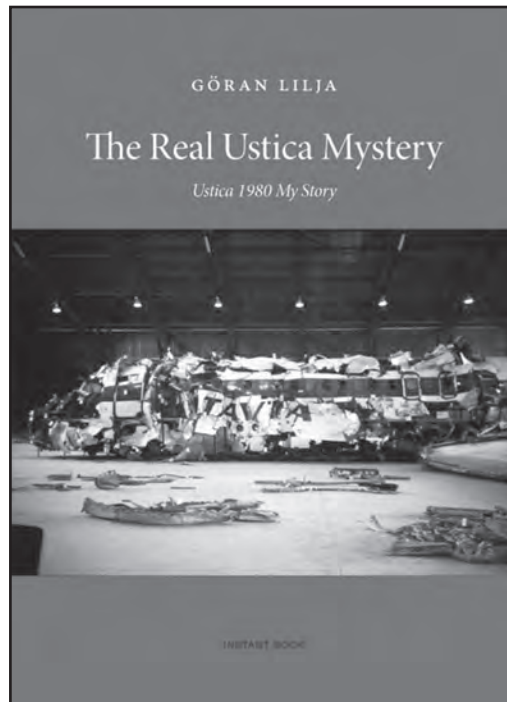
# System Safety Bookshelf

## A Good Investigation Gone Bad

How would you feel if you had worked on an aircraft accident investigation team for five years, established a logical accident cause, written a conclusive report (the Misiti report) and then watched it be discarded for geo-political reasons? *The Real Ustica Mystery*, written by Göran Lilja, describes just such an incident. This is an interesting and enlightening book that describes an accident investigation that, overall, has taken more than 32 years to conduct — and may still not be complete. The book not only involves an accident investigation, but it also includes mystery and intrigue. If it wasn't a true story, you might think it was a suspense novel.

On the night of June 27, 1980, Itavia Flight 870 was on a routine flight from Bologna, Italy to Palermo, Sicily. Suddenly, the plane vanished from radar and plunged into the Tyrrhenian Sea, near the Mediterranean island of Ustica. All 81 passengers — 68 adults and 13 children — were killed as the plane broke apart on impact. During the last 32 years, there have been many theories about the cause of the crash, and the controversial case has crawled at a snail's pace through investigations, military tribunals and court hearings.

I don't want to give away the intricacies of the plot, but there are many interesting factors that will draw you to this read. For example, it took eight years before the aircraft was finally recovered from the seabed. Although evidence pointed to an onboard bomb as the cause of the crash, many people still want to attribute the cause to a missile from either a French or U.S. military aircraft. Then, to top it off, an Italian general involved in the case was murdered, two pilots in a MiG-23 mysteriously crashed into a nearby mountain shortly after the accident and four high-ranking Italian generals were



### ***The Real Ustica Mystery***

**By Göran Lilja**

**Publisher: Instant Book, Stockholm**

**ISBN-10: 9186939459**

**ISBN-13: 978-9186939458**

**130 pages**

**Price: \$33.50 U.S. / 230 kr / €25**

tried for treason in the case. There is also speculation that Flight 870 was accidentally shot down when two French Mirage fighters, operating under orders from NATO, were dispatched to shoot down Libyan dictator Muammar Qaddafi, who was rumored to be flying over the Mediterranean on the night of June 27, 1980.

In the latest action, Italy's highest criminal court ruled that the Italian government's Defense Ministry and Transportation Ministry would have to pay compensation to some of the victim's families. The court found there was "abundantly clear" evidence that a missile caused the crash of Flight 870 (totally ignoring the evidence contained in the Misiti report on which Göran worked).

Göran was a member of the Misiti Commission, which included several international members who conducted a second investigation of the accident. The report they wrote, referred to as the Misiti Report, conflicted with the first report, but

it appears this group did a more thorough job. One interesting tool the group developed was a matrix that cross correlated all possible accident scenarios against all the evidence collected, clearly showing the actual cause.

You can tell as you read the book that Göran has put his heart and soul into this investigation and its final outcome. Göran lives in Sweden, and is an experienced system safety engineer and accident investigator, as well as a longtime member of the International System Safety Society.

I highly recommend this book for its insight into conducting a credible accident investigation and as an example of how good investigations can easily go bad through no fault of the investigation team.

— Clif Ericson