

# Was Radical Minnesota Senator Paul Wellstone Murdered to Secure Republican Control of the United States Senate?

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*Hailed by The Nation as “the Senator from the Left” and by Mother Jones as “the first 1960s radical elected to the U.S. Senate,” he was killed in a 2002 plane crash just 10 days before a crucial election he was likely to win—a win that would have clinched Democratic control of the Senate by a single vote.*

*Although officially designated an “accident,” could a new investigation reclassify it as an “assassination,” placing Wellstone in the ever-lengthening line of murdered political figures—from John F. Kennedy and Malcolm X to Martin Luther King, Jr., and Robert F. Kennedy—who threatened the status quo?*

In the fall of 2002, in the midst of a heated re-election campaign—and after delivering a strong rebuke to the Iraq War in the Senate chamber two weeks earlier—Minnesota Senator Paul Wellstone (D) was beginning to pull ahead of his Republican opponent, Norm Coleman.

The Democrats at that point only had a slim 50-49 one-seat advantage in the Senate.

But then, on October 25<sup>th</sup>, Wellstone’s plane went down, and history was changed.

With Wellstone dead, the Democrats convinced Walter Mondale—Jimmy Carter’s Vice President—to come out of retirement at age 74 to run against Coleman, but he lost narrowly.

The Republicans in turn reclaimed control of the Senate, which they nailed down with the victory of Saxby Chambliss over Max Cleland—attributed by many to illegal Republican

## [machine manipulation of the vote.](#)

A Democratic Party politician told investigator Michael Ruppert: "I don't think there's anyone on the Hill who doesn't suspect it [that Wellstone was assassinated]. It's too convenient, too coincidental, too damned obvious."<sup>[1]</sup>

A former CIA operative further told Ruppert: "[having played ball \(and still playing, in some respects\) with this current crop of re-invigorated old white men, these clowns are nobody to screw around with.](#) There will be a few more strategic accidents. You can be certain of that."<sup>[2]</sup>

The World Socialist Website noted that, after gutting the social safety net and plotting the criminal invasion of Iraq, "[to imagine that the neo-fascist GOP leadership would suffer moral](#) "qualms over a conveniently timed plane crash would be naive in the extreme."

### Official Explanation

Wellstone was traveling on October 25<sup>th</sup> with his wife and daughter to the funeral of the father of one of his good friends and supporters in the Minnesota State legislature, Tom Rukavina.

Official blame for the crash was initially placed on the weather, which was misdescribed as involving freezing rain. The day of the crash was overcast and chilly but above freezing.

The plane was also equipped with a very sophisticated de-icing system which it did not actually need to activate.

When the weather was eliminated as a cause, [responsibility for the crash was directed against the pilots](#), even though the principal pilot, Richard Conry, 55, had 5,200 hours of experience, the highest possible rating, and had passed his Federal Aviation Authority (FAA) "flight check" just two days before the fatal flight.

One former co-pilot who had accompanied him 50 times described him as the most careful pilot with whom he had ever flown.<sup>[3]</sup>



"It is heartbreaking," said Gary Martin of St. Paul, who brought flowers to place on the fence outside of Paul Wellstone's University Avenue headquarters. [Source: [twincities.com](http://twincities.com)]

### Early Arrival of FBI Indicates Foreknowledge

The arrival of an FBI team from the Twin Cities in Minnesota at the scene of the crash in Eveleth as early as noon—when the site was only identified an hour earlier and FAA authorities only confirmed the crash at 12:15 p.m.—raises immediate suspicion that they were there to clean up the scene of incriminating evidence.

Jurisdiction over an investigation of this kind was held by the National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB), and the travel time between the Twin Cities—193 miles from the crash site in a remote area of Eveleth—was at least two and a half hours.

This is a highly conservative estimate, particularly considering the fact that the crash site according to the local sheriff was a "real unpleasant piece of property that required all-terrain vehicles."<sup>[4]</sup>

The FBI team would have had to have left the Twin Cities, at the latest, at 9:30 a.m.—and probably well before—to get to the crash scene by noon—*an hour before Wellstone's plane crash and well before there were any signs of problems with the flight.*

### Never Trust a Spook

By late afternoon, an FBI spokesman, Paul McCabe, issued a statement—repeated in newspapers across the country—that there was no indication the crash had been related to terrorism.

That a definitive conclusion could be rendered so quickly appears to be impossible.

The NTSB nevertheless deferred to the FBI's judgment—even though it was supposed to have jurisdiction over the investigation—and reiterated the claim that there was no foul play.

A year-long investigation seemingly confirmed the latter conclusion.

The NTSB at the time was headed by Carol Carmody who was a former employee of the CIA.

Wellstone had in the past questioned the abuses of the CIA and was skeptical of the intelligence surrounding 9/11 and the Iraq War.

Wellstone was also strongly pro-union when Carmody had managed a firm that administered Taft-Hartley pension plans [Taft-Hartley was a notoriously anti-union law passed by Congress in 1947].

After the crash, Carmody searched for an in-flight voice recorder—which there was none, or which the FBI removed from the scene and destroyed.

She also breached protocol by announcing that the weather was behind the crash when this was speculation—only factual information is supposed to be released.

James Sanders, author of a [book on the 1996 crash of a TWA flight](#), referred to Carmody as a [“political hack willing to accommodate those who can make her a brighter future.”](#)<sup>[5]</sup>

Sanders believes that the TWA flight crashed after a bomb went off on board and that Carmody helped to cover this up.

Carmody was also involved in the investigation and apparent cover-up of a [plane crash that killed Missouri Governor Mel Carnahan \(D\) in October 2000 when he was in the thick of a campaign for the U.S. Senate against John Ashcroft \(R\)](#), who was later appointed as Attorney General by President George W. Bush.



## Missouri Gov. Mel Carnahan is believed dead in plane crash

**Governor's 2nd political career began in '80s as treasurer**

**He held 3 statewide offices but remained private person**

**By JO MANNING**

*Post-Dispatch Political Correspondent*

Mel Carnahan had held three statewide offices since 1980 and run state government for more than seven years. He was at the center of many of Missouri's hottest debates over education funding, taxes, campaign-finance rules and abortion.

He was lauded and lambasted as Missouri's most aggressive and active governor in decades.

The Mel Carnahan Foundation is a party in politics — a private person.

When 60-year-old photos of him in a military dress uniform, the incident shocked many of his closest colleagues for an additional reason. Most didn't know that Carnahan was, at all, much less than he was the loud singer for decades in various quarters.

They also probably didn't know that, even as governor, Carnahan had lost the family's grocery shopping (JOHN A. RANGEL'S COLLECTION)

■ Washed the dishes frequently to relieve his wife.

■ Stashed off occasionally to his family along the Katy Trail, often taking a bag to pick up trash along the route.

Although publicly accessible, Carnahan generally avoided Jefferson City's social scene. He preferred the company of his family — and the peace of a remote all-ages neighborhood of his adopted hometown of Berlin.

His private nature extended to his public persona. Carnahan was known for his intransigent delivery of law, but his personal reluctance to talk about himself, private or not.

See Carnahan, A12

**His son Randy and a staff member also were on board**



Source said Missouri Gov. Mel Carnahan left a hotel room in St. Louis around 6:30 p.m. Monday and never arrived in New Madrid, Mo.

**By DONALD E. FRANKLIN**

*St. Louis Post-Dispatch*

A plane believed to be carrying Missouri Gov. Mel Carnahan, his son and a member of his staff crashed in rural Jefferson County on Monday night. Those appeared to be the survivors.

Jerry Brackbill, the governor's press aide, said he had no confirmed reports that a plane crash was on his mind.

"We know there is a plane down in Jefferson County, and that's all I can say right now," he said.

His son, Randy Carnahan, was in St. Louis and was told the same story.

One of the governor's sons, Randy, is his regular guest when on campaign business. They were supposed to be in New Madrid, Mo., for a political event and were scheduled to leave back to St. Louis by today.

Source said Carnahan left St. Louis around 6:30 p.m. Monday and never arrived in New Madrid.

Chris Jeffery, the governor's campaign adviser and his former chief of staff, is also thought to have been on the plane.

At 11 p.m., the governor's office called the lieutenant governor and the state treasurer, who were both in St. Louis, to return to Jefferson City immediately for an emergency.

If the governor dies, the power of the governor's office falls to the lieutenant governor.

Gov. Kenneth I. Cook, head of the state Department of Public Safety, was in the governor's office Monday night trying to get information.

"It's still very preliminary," Brackbill said.

Searchers of firefighters were searching for a small plane believed to have crashed Monday night in northern Jefferson County.

The plane, a twin engine Cessna, left St. Louis North Airport at 6:30 p.m., said officials with the Federal Aviation Administration.

Searchers found a debris field about 200 yards across, along with human remains. There was no sign of survivors.

See Crash, A12

### PRESIDENTIAL DEBATES 2000 WASHINGTON UNIVERSITY

## Bush, Gore make final preparations for tonight's contest

**Campus bustles as candidates seek quiet**

**By DONALD E. FRANKLIN**

*Post-Dispatch Political Correspondent*

As the clock ticked down for tonight's first presidential debate here, Washington University was

buzzing with activity Monday.

Technicians performed final lighting checks for the set, checked up more than 10 generators, computers and other equipment, while more than 200 student volunteers worked to make sure there were no last-minute glitches.

"We're 99 percent complete with all our preparations," said Janet Fendley, media director for

the Commission on Presidential Debates. She said everything's been going smoothly.

The candidates, too, were busy preparing for tonight's event, the last of three televised debates moderated by public broadcaster PBS's Katie Couric.

Source said George W. Bush, the Republican nominee, flew into St. Louis on Monday evening. He was with several hundred well-wishers at an airport hotel and

accepted the endorsement of the National Trust for Historic Preservation.

Bush then headed out to Hunter House, the west St. Louis country estate of Stephen and Kim Brown, and a favorite Republican fundraising site. From there, the campaign said the site was chosen as Bush could prepare in peace and jog undisturbed this morning.

Vice President Al Gore, the Democratic nominee, has been in a

### Television coverage

The first presidential debate will air live from St. Louis from 8 to 10 tonight on broadcast networks CBS, NBC, ABC, FOX, PBS, KMOX (Channel 35), KSDK (Channel 4) and KSDH (Channel 35). In addition, the debate will be carried by cable networks CNN, C-SPAN, Fox News Channel and MSNBC. PBS Channel 35 will show the debate on tape delay beginning at 10:30 p.m.

See Debate, A12

**Gore gets ready:** Vice President Al Gore left St. Louis Monday with Missouri voters who greeted him for two hours on issues from education to health care. A14

**Bush is eager to debate:** "My message... is not going to be a partisan message. It's going to be an American message," the Texas governor says at a hotel here. A14

**Shadows could do without the hubbub:** Tonight's presidential debate between Al Gore and George W. Bush leaves mixed feelings on campus. A14

### NATIONAL LEAGUE CHAMPIONSHIP SERIES

## Mets shut out Cardinals in Game 5, head to World Series

**By STEVE DEMANNO**

*St. Louis Post-Dispatch*

**NEW YORK** — The Mets held up their end of the bargain Monday night. Now they must wait to find out if the Cardinals will deliver on the city's dream of a Subway Series.

The Mets ended the Cardinals' season in a cold, damp night at Shea Stadium as they scored three runs in the first inning on the way to a 7-0 win to capture the National League Championship Series 4-1.

They will play in the World Series against the winner of the American League Championship Series between the Yankees and Seattle Mariners starting Saturday.

Mets pitcher Mike Hampton pitched a complete game and limited the Cardinals to three hits after shutting them out for seven innings in the series opener.

The Cardinals never had in their four losses. They allowed at least one run in the first inning of each game — 12 runs over five games — and couldn't answer.

The Mets scored three runs in the first inning against Cardinals pitcher Pat Hentgen, who made his first start after a 16-day injury. Former Cardinals fielder continued to torment his old team by hitting a three-run double in the fourth inning, giving him eight runs batted in for the series.

Details in Sports, D3

### WEATHER

**Today:** Partly cloudy; High 68, Low 50

**Wednesday:** Partly cloudy; High 75

**Other weather:** See POSTDISPATCH.COM for 10-day outlook

10/17/00 10:00 AM

10/17/00 10:00 AM

[Source: [stltoday.com](http://stltoday.com)]

## Suspicion Deepens

More suspicion about the possibility of a cover-up was aroused by a) the destruction of records of planes landing in Duluth the morning of the Wellstone crash, b) missing information from logs about those at the crash scene, and c) the NTSB's cancellation of a public meeting for comments from citizens about the crash.<sup>[6]</sup>

First responders to the crash scene were ordered not to take photos by the FBI, and even the Associated Press had trouble getting photos—its photographer was only allowed 15 minutes at the crash site, which was unusual.<sup>[7]</sup>

The NTSB's year-long investigation was chaired by two public relations specialists—and not aviation experts—appointed by George W. Bush, whose personal dislike of Wellstone was well known and long-standing.

One, Ellen Engelman Connors, worked on Bush's Homeland Security team, and the other, Mark Rosenker, was director of the White House's military office.

### Secret History

The NTSB had a record of covering up aerial terrorism dating back to the Nixon administration.

Sherman Skolnick's 1973 book, [\*The Secret History of Airplane Sabotage\*](#), detailed the sabotage of a United Airlines plane in Chicago in December 1972, a month after Richard Nixon's re-election.



Crash scene of United Airlines flight 553 carrying 12 passengers related to the Watergate burglary.

[Source: [roughdiplomacy.org](http://roughdiplomacy.org)]

Twelve passengers related to the Watergate burglary died in the crash, including Mrs. E. Howard Hunt, wife of the Watergate burglar and CIA operative who herself served in the CIA.

According to Skolnick, Ms. Hunt had more than \$2 million in valuables, obtained by blackmailing Nixon over his role in the 1963 assassination of JFK.

Skolnick's team reviewed unpublicized NTSB files which indicated sabotage, and Skolnick accused the NTSB—which headed the investigation—of participating in a cover-up.<sup>[8]</sup>

### What Happened to Wellstone's Plane

The *St. Paul Pioneer* reported the day after the crash that there was “no distress call or any indication of trouble before the plane went down about 10:20.”

The pilot's last transmission occurred at 10:18 a.m. where there was "no evidence from the pilot's voice that there was any difficulty, no reported problems, no expressed concerns."<sup>[9]</sup>

At 10:19 a.m., radar showed that the aircraft began drifting south. The last radar appearance—coming two minutes later—showed that the plane took a curious turn west, away from the runway and then a steep dive, indicating that the plane was out of control.

The wing flaps, which should have been fully extended for landing, were extended only to 15 degrees—the setting used for an initial approach descent.<sup>[10]</sup>

Two eyewitnesses claimed that they heard the engines of the plane cutting out, or going on and off—a phenomenon not in alignment with an aerodynamic stall, which the official investigation claimed.

After the plane cut out, a diving noise was heard, followed by an explosion.

Another witness reported hearing a gunshot going off or loud bang beforehand—indicating a possible sniper attack.

Other eyewitnesses saw blue smoke coming from the crashed airplane—which indicated an electrical, and not fuel, fire—and evidence that the fuselage burned badly, and the wings did not.

The latter was odd because the fuel was in the wing tanks, which had been separated from the fuselage as it went through the trees and should have emitted thick black smoke.

Another oddity was that the wing section was charred but the tree that the plane supposedly clipped was not.

This would indicate that either the wing was moved from the crash site (unlikely and illegal) or the wing was on fire before the plane hit the ground—caused possibly by a bomb—accounting for the lack of damage to the tree itself.

Autopsy reports indicate that three of the victims had smoke in their lungs which implied they had survived the moment of impact long enough to be affected by the fire, or that the plane was on fire on the way down.<sup>[11]</sup>

#### More Evidence of Foul Play and Cover-up

Jim Ongaro who was within a stone's throw of the plane, told investigator Jim Fetzer that he received an odd call on his cell phone at about the exact time of the crash in which he heard a cross between a roar and a loud humming noise on the other end. A friend further left him a message which he never received on voicemail.<sup>[12]</sup>

Ongaro also said that another friend told him that co-workers of his that were pilots said that there was no way that the plane should have burned up the way it did.

When Ongaro emailed the Duluth office of Congressman James Oberstar, Oberstar (D-Minn.) responded by stating that the FBI had already investigated any possibility of foul play and ruled it out.



According to researcher Four Arrows (aka Don Trent Jacobs) and James H. Fetzer, the key to understanding the crash was the complete cessation of communication between the pilots and the control tower in the minutes before the crash.<sup>[13]</sup>

Pilot error or mechanical problems could not account for loss of communication nor could difficult weather, indicating foul play.

Four Arrows and Fetzer speculate that a small bomb may have caused the crash, or direct energy weapons that the military had developed, or an electromagnetic pulse that police use to stop carjackers during high-speed chases.

#### Previous Assassination Attempt

Wellstone had survived a previous assassination attempt in December 2000 when he had traveled to Colombia.

At the time, Wellstone was a leading congressional critic of Plan Colombia, a \$1.3 billion program to finance Colombia's War on Drugs which involved aerial spraying of coca fields by private military contractors who stood to make a huge amount of money.

As Wellstone was traveling from the airport in Bogota after his arrival, [a bomb was found along his route](#). The State Department downplayed the incident and it was thereafter forgotten.<sup>[14]</sup>



Paul Wellstone during his visit to Colombia in March 2001 where he survived an assassination attempt. Wellstone was a strong critic of Plan Colombia. [Source: [politico.com](http://politico.com)]

The next day, Wellstone and his staff were [sprayed with glyphosate](#), a chemical that has been routinely documented as the cause of a variety of illnesses in the local population. It has left certain regions of Colombia, as one native put it, "without butterflies or birds."

#### Manipulation of Pilots?

Despite an excellent reputation, Richard Conry served two years in federal prison [for mail fraud in connection with a family business he was running](#).



This criminal past suggests the possibility that he was manipulated into participating in a conspiracy plot and convinced to carry something on board the plane that he thought was contraband or narcotics but was really a tracking device or bomb.<sup>[15]</sup>

If that was the case, this would explain why Conry sounded nervous in a routine pre-flight phone call with air traffic controllers about the weather.<sup>[16]</sup>

Co-pilot Michael Guess, 30, also had a criminal record, so he could have been manipulated as well.

Was the Murder Weapon an Electromagnetic Weapon?

Researchers Four Arrows and Fetzer believe that Wellstone's plane may have been taken down by an electromagnetic weapon (EMP)—such as a laser beam—that the military applied in Iraq.

EMPs are capable of unleashing in a flash as much electrical power—2 billion watts or more—as the Hoover Dam generates in 24 hours, and destroying any electronics within 1,000 feet of the flash by short-circuiting internal electrical connections.

According to Four Arrows and Fetzer, there are a number of ways that EMPs could have been used in the Wellstone crash.

A small incendiary bomb may have been placed in the airplane and activated by radio wave when the plane was near the airport or a pulse bomb could have been fired at the airplane on approach causing the electronics system to go out of control.

Jamming could have been activated and a decoy VHF Omnidirectional Radio Range (VOR) signal sent, tricking the plane's instruments and pilots into believing the airport was somewhere several degrees off the true course to the runway, with the pilot following that signal into the ground.

The non-descript van, full of covert electronic jamming equipment, afterwards would have casually left the area, looking just like any other TV repair truck or moving van.<sup>[17]</sup>

Two witnesses—Megen Williams and a blond-haired man interviewed on CNN—said they observed a flash of light at the rear of the plane shortly before the crash, giving credibility to the EMP/laser weapon theory.<sup>[18]</sup>

After being struck by EMP, Wellstone's aircraft could have functioned more or less normally but without any control systems, instruments or radios. This would account for the assertion that the plane engines were still running when the plane hit the ground.

When the plane crashed, someone may have made sure cockpit instruments were consumed in flames—on the remote chance that a serious full inquiry were to be demanded.<sup>[19]</sup>

An Idealist in Washington

Paul Wellstone was a rare breed in U.S. politics: an idealist and true progressive who was

dubbed “the conscience of the U.S. Senate.”

The [son of Ukrainian immigrants](#) who stood only 5’5”, Wellstone [grew up in Arlington, Virginia](#), and [obtained his Ph.D. degree from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill in 1969](#) after writing a thesis entitled “Black Militants in the Ghetto: Why They Believe in Violence.”

A championship wrestler in high school and college, Wellstone’s political outlook was forged through his participation in the civil rights and anti-Vietnam War movements of the 1960s.<sup>[20]</sup>

In 1969, Wellstone moved to Northfield, Minnesota, to teach political science at Carleton College where he stayed for the next 21 years.

The FBI took note of the bushy-haired college professor when he was [arrested on May 7, 1970, at a protest against the Vietnam War at the Federal Office Building in downtown Minneapolis](#).

According to a [New York Times Magazine profile](#), Wellstone was often at odds with other faculty and the Carleton administration, and was [in his element instigating protests—from fighting Carleton’s investment policies in South Africa to battling banks that were foreclosing on farms](#).<sup>[21]</sup>

In 1974, at the age of 28, Wellstone was [granted tenure](#) when students and other colleagues rallied to his defense after he was going to be dismissed because he chose not to write for academic journals.<sup>[22]</sup>

In the early 1980s, Wellstone began his political career [working in Minnesota Governor Rudy Perpich’s office after helping to organize grassroots opposition to high-voltage electricity transmission lines in rural Minnesota](#).<sup>[23]</sup>



Wellstone with Rudy Perpich, right, in June 1990 after Wellstone wins party endorsement for Senate. Lt. Gov. Marlene Johnson is in the center. [Source: [startribune.com](http://startribune.com)]

After a failed bid for state auditor, Wellstone was named in 1984 to the Democratic Party National Committee and, in 1988, became the state campaign co-chairman for Jesse Jackson's bid for the presidency, and [national co-chair of Democratic Party nominee Michael Dukakis](#).

Casting himself as a political outsider, Wellstone ran for the United States Senate in 1990—[using a rickety green school bus, a humorous ad campaign styled after a Michael Moore documentary and a pledge to serve only two terms—and upset the Republican incumbent, Rudy Boschwitz, who outspent Mr. Wellstone by seven times.](#)<sup>[24]</sup>

One of his first acts as a Senator was to [stage an emotionally charged press conference at the Vietnam Veterans Memorial in which he urged the Bush Sr. administration not to attack Iraq.](#)<sup>[25]</sup>

Wellstone subsequently established his credentials as a populist in the tradition of Robert La Follette who took on corporate power like almost no one else of his generation.<sup>[26]</sup>

Just before his death, Wellstone had proposed putting \$2 billion into Minnesota's schools instead of further tax cuts for the top 1% of incomes.

Wellstone further a) stopped last-minute efforts by drug companies to extend exclusive patents and promoted a strong patients' rights bill and decent prescription drug benefits; b) said no to privatizing social security; c) helped strengthen and pass the McCain-Feingold campaign finance reform bill; d) passed laws [banning gifts to members of Congress](#); and e) [though Jewish, called on Israel to be more compromising with its Arab neighbors](#).



Wellstone receiving re-nomination for a second term in the Senate at the Democratic-Farmer-Labor Convention in Minneapolis in June 1996. [Source: [politico.com](http://politico.com)]

Wellstone additionally a) helped pass a strong Minnesota-friendly farm bill with amendments that reduced the advantages of corporate agribusiness; b) led the fight to stop Big Oil from

drilling in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge; c) championed tribal sovereignty and native Indian rights; and d) stood up for fair trade against the General Agreements on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) and World Trade Organization (WTO), which eased restrictions on big business.<sup>[27]</sup>

### A Very Convenient Death

After Wellstone's death, a poll in the *St. Paul Pioneer* found that 69% of readers felt that Wellstone was killed owing to a GOP conspiracy.

Michael Niman, a professor of journalism at Buffalo State College, wrote that ["Wellstone emerged as the most visible obstacle standing in the way of a draconian political agenda by an unelected government. And now he is conveniently gone."](#)

The day after Wellstone's death, the GOP transferred \$700,000 to be used in the effort to defeat Democratic Party Senator Max Cleland in Georgia, money that the GOP had planned to use against Wellstone in Minnesota.

The Bush family's hatred of Wellstone went back to 1991 when, at a reception for new congresspeople, he told then President George H.W. Bush that the country "would be ripped apart if it went to war." Bush turned to one of his advisers after and asked: "who is this chickenshit?"<sup>[28]</sup>

Subsequently, at a swearing in ceremony in the Senate, [Wellstone handed Vice President Dan Quayle a videotape of a Minnesota town meeting where the Bush administration's war policies were criticized.](#)



[Wellstone in January 1991](#) handing Vice President Dan Quayle videotape of Minnesotans criticizing the Gulf War. [Source: [politico.com](#)]

In the 2002 election cycle, George W. Bush had made terminating Wellstone's Senate career his foremost priority.



Political reporter John Nichols wrote: *"The Bushies despise Wellstone, who unlike most Senate Democrats has been fighting spirited battles against the new administration policies on everything from the environment to the tax cuts for the rich to military aid for the 'Plan Colombia' drug war boondoggle. The Bush camp has been focusing highest-level attention on 'Plan Wellstone'—its project to silence progressive opposition."*

By October 2002, Bush had visited Minnesota four times to drum up support for his hand-picked candidate, former St. Paul mayor Norm Coleman, a strong supporter of the Iraq War.<sup>[29]</sup>

Large sums of money were being funneled into the state, including one million dollars for advertisements attacking Wellstone that were put up by an anonymous group calling itself "Americans for Job Security."

At a meeting with war veterans in Willmar, Minnesota, two days before his death, Wellstone said that Vice President Dick Cheney had told him, "if you vote against the war in Iraq, the Bush administration will do whatever is necessary to get you. There will be severe ramifications for you and the state of Minnesota."

Obviously this was no idle threat.

Two weeks earlier, Wellstone had spoken eloquently on the Senate floor against the Iraq War and the "wisdom of relying too heavily on a preemptive go it alone military approach"—prompting a bump for him in the polls that shocked the Bush administration.



Senator Wellstone was slated to win re-election after voting against George Bush's "war resolution" in Congress. [Source: [oilempire.us](http://oilempire.us)]

As Chairman of a new Securities Reform Committee, Wellstone was also at the time trying to block the nomination of William Webster, former CIA and FBI head and "best friend of big

business and big accounting firms” to be the new chairman of the U.S. Securities and Exchange Commission’s (SEC’s) Accounting Oversight Commission.

Wellstone had further tried to bar corporate tax dodgers from being eligible for Defense Department contracts, and successfully amended the Homeland Security bill to bar those companies from getting contracts with the new Department of Homeland Security.

After the November election—and Wellstone’s tragic death—the final version of the Homeland Security bill gutted the Wellstone amendment and corporate lobby groups were able to land billion-dollar defense contracts in Iraq and elsewhere.<sup>[30]</sup>

As one of the few genuine progressives in Congress, Wellstone would have been a formidable presidential candidate in 2004.

With the increasing exposure of the Bush administration’s corruption in books like Greg Palast’s *The Best Democracy Money Can Buy* (2002) and Michael Moore’s *Stupid White Men* (2004), he would have had a better chance to beat Bush than any other candidate.

That is why his plane had to be taken down.

\*

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## Notes

1. Four Arrows (aka Don Trent Jacobs) and James H. Fetzer, Ph.D., *American Assassination: The Strange Death of Senator Paul Wellstone* (El Prado, NM: “Vox Pop, 2004).
2. Sue Cantrell, who lives a few hundred yards from Camp Peary, the CIA training camp in Williamsburg, Virginia, reported that the night before Wellstone’s death, at around 1:15 a.m., she heard a “large plane take off from the runway [at Camp Peary]. In the previous three years of living here, I have never heard a plane take off in the middle of the night.”
3. Four Arrows and Fetzer, *American Assassination*.
4. Four Arrows and Fetzer, *American Assassination*, 11, 82, 83.
5. Four Arrows and Fetzer, *American Assassination*, 18.
6. Four Arrows and Fetzer, *American Assassination*, 85.
7. Four Arrows and Fetzer, *American Assassination*, 85.
8. Four Arrows and Fetzer, *American Assassination*, 124, 125.
9. Four Arrows and Fetzer, *American Assassination*, 18. The FAA spokeswoman stated that there were no signs of distress coming from the plane’s crew on its final approach.
10. Four Arrows and Fetzer, *American Assassination*, 44. The stall warning on a King Air—which Wellstone flew in—is quite loud. With two pilots and six passengers, it could not have been missed. Thus, there was ample time to regain speed.

11. Four Arrows and Fetzer, *American Assassination*, 131.
12. Four Arrows and Fetzer, *American Assassination*, 48, 49.
13. Four Arrows and Fetzer, *American Assassination*, 61.
14. Four Arrows and Fetzer, *American Assassination*, 54.
15. Four Arrows and Fetzer, *American Assassination*, 101.
16. Four Arrows and Fetzer, *American Assassination*, 101.
17. Four Arrows and Fetzer, *American Assassination*, 101, 146. The authors present a scenario in which the plane ran off course, and the cockpit was zapped, resulting in a pilotless plane. When the decoy VOR was switched off, the plane's instruments re-oriented to the Eveleth airport causing a sharp right turn. After the plane crashed, someone made sure cockpit instruments were consumed in flames—on the remote chance that a serious full inquiry were to be demanded—as the cable TV/power company/telephone service vehicle made its escape from the scene of the crime.
18. Four Arrows and Fetzer, *American Assassination*, 136, 146.
19. Four Arrows and Fetzer, *American Assassination*, 146. One other oddity is that Raytheon representatives were on the crash scene after Wellstone's plane was downed. Not only did Raytheon make the King Air A-100 plane on which he flew but they also manufactured high-tech weapons of the kind that were used to bring the plane down.
20. See Bill Lofy, *Paul Wellstone: The Life of a Passionate Progressive* (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 2005); Senator Paul Wellstone, *The Conscience of a Liberal: Reclaiming the Compassionate Agenda* (New York: Random House, 2001).
21. Dennis J. McGrath and Dane Smith, *Professor Wellstone Goes to Washington: The Inside Story of a Grassroots U.S. Senate Campaign* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1995), 33, 34. Wellstone made enemies on the Carleton Board of Trustees when in 1971 he urged the removal of its chairman, Edson Spencer, Vice-President of Honeywell Corporation which manufactured anti-personnel bombs used in Vietnam. Wellstone accused Spencer of managing a "criminal corporation."
22. McGrath and Smith, *Professor Wellstone Goes to Washington*, 34.
23. Lofy, *Paul Wellstone*, 51; Wellstone, *The Conscience of a Liberal*, 9, 10, 11, 17. In 1982, Wellstone was arrested for trespassing at a bank in the central Minnesota town of Paynesville after leading a protest of farmers who were protesting bank foreclosures and seizure of their land after they had been saddled with heavy debt. Wellstone had further supported a strike of meatpackers at the Hormel Company in southern Minnesota in 1985/6. With a gift for oratory and his success as a political organizer, he subsequently emerged as a leader in Minnesota's Democratic-Farmer-Labor Party (DFL).
24. McGrath and Smith, *Professor Wellstone Goes to Washington*.
25. Lofy, *Paul Wellstone*, 67.
26. The only black hole in Wellstone's record was his misguided support for the war in Bosnia and bombing of Kosovo.
27. Four Arrows and Fetzer, *American Assassination*, 157-173; McGrath and Smith, *Professor Wellstone Goes to Washington*, xxiii.
28. Lofy, *Paul Wellstone*, 67, 68.
29. A moderate Republican, Coleman had been part of the hippie counterculture who sold out to the establishment. In the 1980s, he was described by a local journalist as a "clean cut pin striped cigar smoking law and order prosecutor who liked schmoozing with business leaders a whole lot better than with welfare rights activists." Lofy, *Paul Wellstone*, 116. After becoming Mayor of St. Paul, Coleman switched from the Democratic Party to Republican and started [adopting conservative economic policies, opposed drug legalization and adopted hawkish views on Iraq, Iran](#) and Gaza in alignment with the American Israel Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC). After his Senate career ended, Coleman founded the

American Action Network, a conservative advocacy organization with ties to [Karl Rove's](#) American Crossroads, and became a [lobbyist for Saudi Arabia](#).

30. Four Arrows and Fetzer, *American Assassination*, 33. A mental health reform bill Wellstone championed, requiring insurance companies to provide mental health coverage on par with physical health coverage, was also blocked.

*Featured image: Wellstone as a young political science professor at Carleton College. [Source: [Minnesota.publicradio.org](#)]*

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