

CANADA

airport outside of Washington after a bomb exploded in the cargo hold. "Rules are meant to be smashed if you are trying to avoid smashing a bunch of people on an airplane."

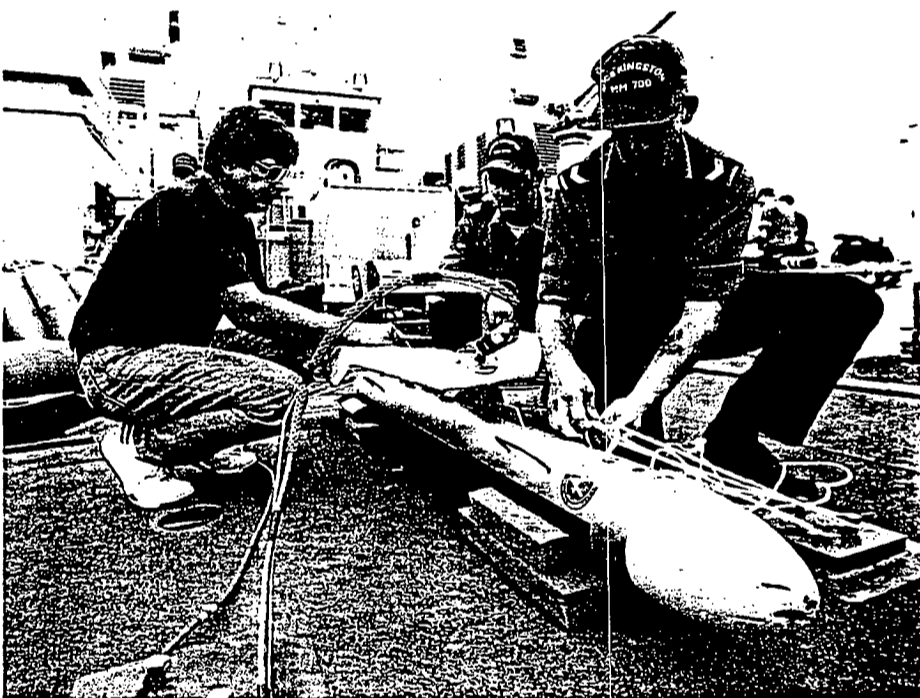
However, John Nance, a pilot and aviation analyst from Tacoma, Wash., told *Maclean's* that such accusations are both premature and irresponsible. Nance, who has written several books on airline safety, agrees Zimmermann could have opted for "a rocky, though not particularly dangerous," straight-in approach to the Halifax airport. But he says the early indications are that the aircrew believed they had the smoke situation contained and were following the normal procedures for dealing with it. And though something clearly went terribly wrong in the ensuing moments, Nance says, "the most dangerous thing in an accident investigation is to go stampeding towards a conclusion" before the facts are in.

If last week's developments were any indication, that may be a long time coming. As of Saturday, only about two per cent of the MD-11 jet had been recovered from the icy Atlantic waters and just four of the 229 crash victims had been positively identified. But diving efforts had begun to try to retrieve many of the corpses trapped in the plane's fuselage (searchers had pinpointed five sections of the plane, lying in about 60 m of water). At the same time, the USS Grapple—the ship that helped in the deep-sea salvage of the downed TWA Flight 800 off Long Island in 1996—was moving into position off Peggys Cove to begin lifting up the sections.

For those involved in the ongoing recovery effort, the horrific sights they have been exposed to will not soon be forgotten. In ship-to-shore interviews with *Maclean's*, Capt. Jim Dockerill of the Canadian Coast Guard vessel *Mary Hichens*—one of 14 navy, coast guard and RCMP vessels regularly patrolling the wreckage site for floating debris—described the assignment's emotional toll. Beyond the grim task of retrieving body fragments, Dockerill says it is the personal effects of the victims—and particularly of the children—that are most disturbing. "With wallets, passports and the



THE GRIM TASK CONTINUES: Troops comb the Nova Scotia shoreline for debris from the crash; personnel onboard HMCS Kingston (below) prepare to deploy a side-scanning sonar



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