

FLYING HIGH, FLYING BLIND

Think of it this way.

Hundreds of commercial airliners carry people thousands of miles on thousands of flights a day. They are designed with so-called triple redundant safety systems. Every critical system has a backup system; and the backup systems have backup systems as well. A lot has to go wrong all at once for all of them to fail, and, in fact, they rarely do. Planes do crash however, and lots of people usually die when that happens. So what do we do? Stop flying?

By any measure, commercial flight is one of the safest means of transportation ever devised by man. It is inherently dangerous only because airliners operate miles above ground. On those rare occasions when everything does go wrong, a crash is inevitable.

Imagine the Police Department as an airliner, a complex system that somehow manages to perform thousands of difficult and often dangerous tasks without incident every single day. Backup systems are built-in to ensure that it doesn't crash. But sometimes, when the right combination of things all go wrong, it crashes, and the results are usually very tragic.

What makes the airplane susceptible to crashing is the fact that it is up in the air in the first place. Police Officers argue that, as with an airplane, danger is inherent in what they do as well.

A cop's most fundamental beliefs—proactive policing, interjecting themselves into dangerous and stressful crisis situations, putting criminals in jail, and all the while maintaining a fiercely guarded political independence--are things that they have chosen to believe. It's the equivalent of an airliner taking off in heavy fog. If you choose to do so, every once in a while you are going to crash. You do everything humanly possible to prevent it, but you have to be enough of a realist to know that sometimes bad things will happen.

As they say....."ships are safest in harbor--but that is not what ships are built for."