

# Airliner Lacked Approval

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Federal Aviation Administration said Wednesday the doomed Wichita State football airliner had received no valid flying certificate when taken out of mothballs—contrary to the earlier claim of its owner.

FAA officials in Salt Lake City and Las Vegas said the twin-engine plane which crashed in the Rocky Mountains Friday and a companion craft had been issued only 10-day ferry permits Sept. 11 after they had been taken out of storage after three years.

Jack Richards of Jack Richards Aviation Co., Inc., owner of the planes, said Tuesday they had been given annual air worthiness certificates in Las Vegas Sept. 8.

The \$68.4 million cash balance now on hand is up 25 million over the same period last year when the balance was \$43.4 million.

But Roger Chastaine, FAA maintenance inspector in Las Vegas, said the only permits were issued words solely so the planes could be flown elsewhere for maintenance work and could be occupied only by their flight crews.

Richards previously said the two Martin 404 aircraft were ferried to Oklahoma City Sept. 15.

One plane could not be used for a scheduled Wichita State football trip Sept. 25 because it damaged a propeller when a landing gear strut failed. This was the same plane that crashed into the Rockies of Colorado a week later, killing 30 passengers including 13 Wichita State football players.

The second plane served the Wichita State team without incident Sept. 25-26 and took half the team to Logan, Utah, Friday. But the FAA grounded it on an emergency basis when it reported finding 16 maintenance defects in an inspection that followed its sister plane's crash.

FAA officials also said the plane which crashed may have been 4,000 pounds over its maximum weight limit of 44,900 pounds.

A National Transportation Safety Board spokesman has theorized the plane flew into a blind canyon, could not escape and crashed into an abruptly rising ridge at the foot of the Continental Divide.

Co-pilot Ronald Skipper, recovering from crash injuries in a Denver hospital, said in a telephone interview the plane was flying a scenic sightseeing route through the mountains. But he would not discuss details of the crash.

Skipper is president of Golden Eagle Aviation, which supplied the crews for the planes which Wichita State had leased from Richards Aviation.

An FAA official cautioned Wichita State in August that Golden Eagle had no license to fly a passenger plane as large as the Martin 404.