



## A plane you'd like to have breaking apart

By Chris Mallinos

Toronto - Canada has issued a patent for a futuristic commercial jet design that would protect passengers in an emergency by breaking apart and letting the sections parachute gently to the ground.

But industry experts said on Tuesday that the scheme - which sounds like something out of a James Bond movie - had little chance of success. A parachute-equipped plane would be too heavy and would cost too much.

"For a big airliner, it's just not feasible," said David Greatrix, associate professor of aerospace engineering at Ryerson University in Toronto.

**'It's just such a wacky idea'** "It's just such a wacky idea. If you talk to anyone in the aerospace industry, you'd see that this is pretty far-fetched."

The proposal, which received a patent last month, calls for aircraft to be built in separate parts, then sealed together. In an emergency - anything from mechanical failure to a missile attack - the pilot could push a button to sever the parts with controlled explosions or by using a "laser cutting" device.

Each section would be equipped with parachutes, shock absorbers, inflatable rafts, and propulsion jets that would guide it to the ground, the patent said. The Toronto-based inventor, Chui Wen Chiu, could not be reached for comment.

Greatrix said the added weight of parachutes, shock absorbers and propulsion jets would be too much for a commercial jet, and the planes would be able to carry only a few passengers.

"It would never get certified in the near future based on current technology," he said. "It's just too complex."

Greatrix added that the majority of airline crashes occur on takeoff or landing, when the plane is too close to the ground for parachutes to work.

James DeLaurier, who teaches aircraft design at the University of Toronto, said his initial reaction to reading the patent was "holy cow."

"This would be a maintenance nightmare," he said. "How could you make sure that all these systems are ready to go? The consequences of them not working, or working prematurely, would be dreadful."

But DeLaurier added that this should not deter others from trying to make planes safer.

"I do have respect for (Chiu's) intentions," he said.



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