

MEMORANDUM FOR THE RECORD

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Event: Michael Woodward, American Airlines Flight Service Manager on September 11, 2001

Type: Interview

Prepared by: John Raidt

Special Access Issues: None

Teams: 7

Date: January 25, 2004

Participants (non-Commission): Michael Woodward

Participants (Commission): Bill Johnstone, Lisa Sullivan and John Raidt

Location: The interview was conducted by conference call. Ms. Sullivan and Mr. Raidt hosted the call from the commission's GSA office. Mr. Johnstone participated in the call from his home. Mr. Woodward called from his home in the Boston area.

**Background**

[U] On 9/11/2001 Michael Woodward was employed as a Flight Service Manager for American Airlines at Logan Airport. His office, located in a secured area at Logan Airport on the lower level, was where flight attendants checked-in for duty and completed their pre-flight paperwork etc.

[U] Woodward had worked for the American Airlines (AAL) since June of 1990. He was laid-off by AAL in July of 2003. His job was to oversee flight service. Specifically, he made sure that the flight attendants were "squared away," the flight was properly serviced, staffed, and ready for departure (from a flight service perspective).

**On 9-11**

[U] That morning, Woodward and Ms. Evelyn "Evy" Nunez were managers-on-duty in flight services at Logan Airport. Woodward said the morning of 9-11 was routine. He got to work a little earlier than usual to meet with another employee between 6:30 a.m. and 7:00 a.m. There weren't a lot of people in the office. Since 9-11, Evelyn Nunez, has also left AAL.

[U] He was on board AAL Flight 11 approximately one-half hour before departure. (He doesn't recall if it was a half hour before its scheduled departure time of 7:45, or its actual departure time, at around 8:00 a.m., but he did remember that boarding had

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begun). He remembers talking to the gate agent, but doesn't remember why the flight was late departing. He remembers everything was very routine.

[U] He said he checked things out on the plane and made sure the flight was all set. He remembers speaking with Karen Martin and Bobby Arestegui who were the two first class flight attendants on the flight. He saw several of the crew members board the plane and he talked to several of them.

[U] When flight services were in order, he returned to his office around the departure time (he is not sure whether it was the scheduled time or the actual time of take-off). He said the walk from the departure gate to his office was only a few minutes long. He was in his office doing paperwork. Around 8:30 a.m. (he is not sure of exactly when) he heard Evelyn Nunez, whom he shared the office with, taking a call. She was rather loud. She kept saying "What, what, what?...Who's hurt?...What?." He got up and went into the MOD office and Woodward asked MOD Nunez what the problem was. She said she didn't know. She had gotten a weird phone call. The caller said that someone was hurt on Flight 12. She indicated that someone had been hurt, stabbed. The call had gotten cut-off.

[U] Woodward remembers thinking that perhaps it was air rage because there was a lot of that type of thing going on at the time. He thought that maybe there was a disturbance in the terminal. He and Beth Williams (who is another AAL employee) went to the departure gate where nothing seemed amiss. All the flights in the "morning bank" had left. At this point, he commented to Beth, "wait a minute - Flight 12 comes in at night. It hasn't even left Los Angeles yet." He remembered thinking that sometimes the AAL Operations Center will call when there is a problem on a flight and tell them to meet it when the aircraft lands. After checking out the gate area, Williams and Woodward returned to the office. It was about a two-minute walk from the gate area back to their office.

[U] As he went back into the MOD office, another call had come in and Jim Sayer, a staff assistant (base manager Kelly Cox's assistant) said that it was Amy Sweeney, a flight attendant aboard Flight 11. Amy's first call which Evy Nunez took had been cut off. She was calling back on a cell phone. Woodward, who had known Amy Sweeney personally for ten years, took the call over from Jim Sayer. Woodward added that Sayer, in his position, was not trained to handle emergency calls.

[U] When he took over the call, he said, "Amy, sweetie, what's going on?" He thought this was about 8:30 a.m. or shortly thereafter. Woodward said he could immediately tell by the sound of her voice that something was very wrong.

[U] In a controlled and serious voice she said to Woodward: "listen to me very, very carefully." He knew she needed to impart important information so he immediately got a piece of paper and began taking notes. (Note: Mr. Woodward still has his notes and agreed to forward a copy of them to the Commission).

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[U] Woodward went on to describe her speech as normal, very matter-of-fact, and official. She told Woodward she was in the back of the aircraft sitting next to Betty Ong; that the plane had been hijacked; that a man in first class had his throat slashed; and that two flight attendants had been stabbed. She said that they couldn't contact the cockpit.

[U] Woodward said Sweeney told him something to the effect that there's a bomb in the cockpit. A doctor had been paged. Karen Martin, one of the flight attendants that had been stabbed, was on oxygen. Karen wasn't doing very well but Bobby Arestegui (the other flight attendant who had been stabbed) seemed to be OK. Ms. Sweeney told Woodward that she and Ong were trying to relay as much information as they could to people on the ground. Woodward told Sweeney to tell him everything that was happening every second. At that point, one of Woodward's colleagues who was standing next to him at the time of the call, Nancy Wyatt, called the AAL SOC. She was able to relay information to the SOC in real time because she was listening to Woodward's side of the conversation with Sweeney, and also reading his notes as he took them. Wyatt was telling the SOC that a hijacking was in progress and "this got the ball rolling" at the SOC. Woodward did not know who Nancy Wyatt had talked to at the SOC.

[U] Sweeney then told Woodward that the people who hijacked the airplane were seated in 10(B) and 9(D) and 9(G). She said that they had gained entry to the cockpit. She didn't say how they had done it. Woodward noted that the two first class flight attendants had been stabbed, so we can only guess how they did it (suggesting we may presume that they stabbed the attendants to get the key, or force them to open the cockpit).

~~(SSI)~~ Woodward confirmed that every flight attendant on board was issued two keys: a jet bridge key that gets them through all of the jet bridge gates throughout the system except for Chicago, and a cockpit key which, prior to 9-11, opened all cockpit doors and also opened the cabinets for emergency equipment like the defibrillator and the enhanced medical kit. Flight attendants carried the keys on their person.

[U] Sweeney continued to give him information. She said the hijackers were Middle Eastern. One spoke very little English and one spoke excellent English. Sweeney told Woodward she was seated next to Betty Ong. Betty was on the phone with Nydia Gonzalez – a reservations agent.

[U] Sweeney told him that she and Ong were in the back of the airplane, that the people in coach were under the impression that there was a routine medical emergency in First Class. Jeff Collman, Sara Low and Diane Snyder (other flight attendants on Flight 11) were running around doing things like getting medical supplies while Ong and Sweeney were reporting the events.

[U] She told Woodward that "something is wrong. We are in a rapid descent."  
(Woodward said that he did an interview with Diane Sawyer and Michael Sweeney in April of 2002 that discusses some of this). Sweeney told Woodward that the airplane was

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“all over the place.” She then started to report again about the passenger in business class who had been stabbed. He was bleeding severely.

[U] Woodward asked Sweeney to look out the window to see if she could determine where they were. Sweeney said “we are flying low. We are flying very, very low. We are flying way too low.” And seconds later she said “Oh my God we are way too low” and then the phone call ended.

[U] Woodward said that he doesn't believe that Amy Sweeney called anyone else from the aircraft except him. He believes the phone call was a total of eight or nine minutes. Sweeney didn't say anything about a gun, mace, pepper spray or box cutters. She only mentioned the stabbings and the bomb in the cockpit. The phone call was not recorded. He said the only place that they record calls is in the SOC (Systems Operation Control). Ms. Wyatt's call to the SOC may have been recorded but he is not sure. He believes Amy called the number to the MOD at Logan because she knew it by heart. All of the flight attendants regularly called that number.

[U] Woodward said that Sweeney made no report about the condition of the pilots. She did say at one point in the conversation that she didn't think the pilot had control of the plane because “we are all over the place,” which was toward the end of the call when it was making its rapid descent.

[U] Woodward wrote statements for both the airline's legal department (Doug Cotton's group) and the FBI. He was interviewed by the FBI, CIA and State Department about ten or so times, over a five-day period. He said they were very courteous and professional.

### **Cockpit Keys**

[U] Woodward said that prior to 9-11 cockpit keys weren't safeguarded the way they should have been. With gate agents key security was serious. You were written up if there was a problem or a lost key. He said that key security just wasn't taken as seriously by the Flight Attendants.

### **Other Flights**

[U] Woodward didn't hear of any other problems on flights on 9-11 other than those that were hijacked.

[U] (NOTE: Woodward was provided the Commission's address so that he could forward his notes and the phone number so he could contact us with any other information that he may think of.

[~~SSI~~] (NOTE: Check to see whether it's still the policy that one key fits all jet bridges and whether that's appropriate).