

**MEMORANDUM FOR THE RECORD**

Event: Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) New York TRACON (N90)

(R)

Type of event: Interview with Steven R. Fanno

Date: Tuesday, December 16, 2003

Special Access Issues: ID Check

Prepared by: Geoffrey Brown

Team Number: 8

Location: N90, 1515 Stewart Ave., Westbury, NY 11590

Participants - Non-Commission: Mary M. McCarthy (Office of Regional Counsel, Eastern Region, FAA – One Aviation Plaza, RM 561, Jamaica, NY 11434: P 718-553-3259, F 718-995-5699), Bill D'Alo (NATCA representative, N90)

Participants - Commission: John Azzarello, Miles Kara, Geoffrey Brown

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Note: Please refer to the interview recording for further details.  
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**Background:**

Fanno has been a controller for over thirteen years. He was a PatCo controller and worked at Charleston, West Virginia and at LaGuardia Tower for three and a half years, all before the strike in 1981. He was then hired at N90 in 1996.

**September 11, 2001 (9/11):**

He was at LaGuardia Sector position 104 from about 8:30 AM on which is the final vector coordinator. It controls 20 to 30 miles southwest of LaGuardia. Traffic is fed from the Harp control and the Empire control. Fanno noted that John McKay worked the Empire sector, and possibly John Smith worked the Harp sector on 9/11.

There was a report at about 8:45 AM that an aircraft had hit one of the World Trade Center (WTC) towers. Charles Hannon, Fanno's supervisor, asked if there were any missing aircraft, and was told there were not. Fanno noted that within two or three minutes there were reports to the supervision of N90 of a general aviation aircraft that hit the WTC. Fanno's supervisor also called the towers to attempt to gather more information.

**United Airlines Flight 175 (UAL 175):**

The Liberty South position had taken a point out from Washington Center or from N90's TMU of a primary only aircraft. Liberty South put a tag, the "8" symbol (Liberty South's

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tag – each scope has its own tag) on the primary target. This target was approaching from the northeast and descending. He noted that at first they thought it was a military aircraft. He noted it also had a full data tag, which included the altitude reading. The data block did not indicate it was UAL 175.

Fanno noted that they did not know what had happened to the target until a report came 30 seconds or so later that another aircraft had hit the WTC. Fanno believed that this report came from an Eagle flight. Fanno noted that after this event N90 worked to remove all aircraft from the N90 airspace.

Fanno does not remember who the supervisors were on 9/11.

**Aftermath:**

Fanno began switching all approaches to LaGuardia Airport in order to allow as many as possible to land. Fanno was specifically moving aircraft northeast of Laguardia in a position to land at a specific Laguardia runway. Fanno's supervisor also directed him to keep the LaGuardia aircraft on hold.

Fanno noted that approximately five to eight minutes after UAL 175's impact he was given a break, and another controller took over his sector.

Fanno noted that approximately ten minutes after he was put on break the discussion as to which aircraft hit which tower began in conjunction with the media reports.

Fanno has no knowledge of the Sikorski helicopter, or of ELTs on 9/11.

**Hijack training prior to 9/11:**

Fanno had both classroom and computer refresher training to practice various air traffic scenarios. He commented that this is their basis for handling any in air emergencies. Fanno noted that he does not recall any hijacking practice that would involve the aircraft not informing the controller of the hijack by covert communication.

Fanno noted that his section of the exercise is complete once he notifies his supervisor of the hijacking and monitors the aircraft as it passes through his sector.

Fanno noted that the training for hijacks has not changed, but the awareness of the controllers has.

**Procedural changes:**

Fanno noted that the he now has his filter limits on his scopes set higher than he used to. He now looks five thousand feet higher than what is required. He noted that N90 is on guard for unusual aircraft circumstance.

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**Recommendations:**

Fanno noted the general consensus from the group of controllers he was with on 9/11 that they had no information, and it seemed as if there was information to be had. He does not know where the flow of information came from and led, but he would recommend that in the future the information that is necessary to help keep aircraft safe flow to those people in charge of maintaining the safety of the air traffic system, namely the controllers.

For instance, if Fanno had known that AA 11 had struck the WTC, he would have vectored all his aircraft away from the city immediately. This would have been a safer approach to air traffic than waiting the time period it took to redirect aircraft after the second flight hit the WTC.

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