



MEMORANDUM FOR THE RECORD

Event: Lee Longmire

Type of Event: Interview

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Special Access Issues: None

Prepared by: Bill Johnstone

Team Number: 7

Location: Commission Offices: GSA Conference Room

Participants – Non-Commission: Lee S. Longmire, Assistant Administrator for Operations Policy, TSA; Brandon Straus, TSA Counsel

Participants – Commission: Bill Johnstone, John Raidt

Background

[U] Longmire joined the FAA in 1980 when he went to work as a Field Inspector and Federal Air Marshal at the San Francisco Field Office. In 1983, he moved to the Houston Field Office in similar capacities. He came to the DC Field Office in the summer of 1985, and became Manager of Personnel Security there. In the summer of 1988, Longmire went to Los Angeles to be the Regional Manager for Aviation Security, and in early 1992 was made the Regional Division Manager there. From the summer of 1992 through the summer of 1995 he was the FAA's Deputy Director for Policy in Washington. Longmire became Deputy Director for Operations in July of 1995, and he served in that capacity until he became Acting Director for Operations in September of 2000. In March of 2001, he became Director of Civil Aviation Security Operations at FAA, a position he held until he was made Director of Policy at the end of September 2001. When TSA began operations in 2002, Longmire became head of Aviation Policy, and in early 2003 he moved to his current position as Assistant Administrator for Operations Policy.

[U] In his current capacity in the Operations Policy office, Longmire is responsible for day-to-day operations and for insuring consistency in standard operating procedures between the various transportation modes. Another office, Strategic Policy, is responsible for longer-term issues.

CAPPS

[~~SSI~~] Longmire stated that the original purpose of the Computer Assisted Passenger Prescreening System (CAPPS) was to insure that terrorists were not able to place a bomb in checked-in baggage. The selection criteria were based on that goal. He did not recall the 1997 lapse of a Security Directive, which had subjected selectees to additional screening (beyond scrutiny of checked bags).

Enforcement

[U] Longmire reported that closure of screening checkpoints for security failures was not utilized as an enforcement mechanism, nor did he recall discussion of such action. The focus was on improving the performance of individual screeners. Longmire indicated that if the FAA had been able to reach the conclusion that the screener workforce overall was not performing adequately, checkpoint closure should have been considered. However, the response of the airlines to demonstrated screening performance deficiencies was always to simply change screeners, or sometimes even their screening contractor. (Longmire did recall that the FAA came close to issuing orders to the airports to compel better performance on access controls.)

[U] Longmire did not recall any instance in which de-certification of an airline for security failures was contemplated, but he indicated that the FAA would have done so if the available information justified such an action.

Rulemaking

[U] Longmire reported that FAA rulemaking was an extremely complicated process. For a security rule to even proceed through the process required that it make it to a "top ten" list of agency-wide regulatory priorities, which were determined by formal review committees. (The actual number of agency rule priorities was not necessarily ten each year, but it was in that general range.) Otherwise, no work would be done on the proposal. Even once in the priority list, rules took "years" to go through the process.

[U] In Longmire's view, safety was the biggest concern for the agency, and it was uncommon for security proposals to top safety as rule-making priorities. He reported that there was not a feeling that there was a big security threat, and security proposals typically cost a lot of money. Furthermore, whereas safety proposals could point to very specific data indicating a safety-related problem, security proposals could generally not be tied to a specific threat. Longmire stated that almost all security rules (including, for example, on background checks) "went to the bottom" of the priority list, but that the FAA was able to use Security Directives to implement specific security requirements.

[U] Longmire expressed the opinion that cost-benefit analysis was one of the hardest parts of security rules. It was difficult to peg either costs or benefits. In the absence of specific threat information, the FAA had to approximate benefits, such as the loss of an aircraft and/or lives, and the economic losses to the system. He pointed out, however, that when one aircraft is lost for security reasons, the resulting loss is much larger because of the public's refusal to fly. (This is much less the case when safety is involved.) However, the cost-benefit analysts, as well as the airlines and others, were not willing to accept estimates for such larger losses.

9/11 Family Questions

[U] Longmire did not recall the 1992-93 FAA study on knife use in hijackings. He did recall that the 4-inch standard (for prohibition of longer blades) was derived primarily from state standards.

[U] Longmire also did not recall pre-9/11 consideration of the use of cameras in plane cockpits. However, in trying to bring about such action today, he has run into resistance from airplane crews (for privacy reasons) and airlines (for cost reasons).

Cockpit Hardening and Aircraft Defense

[U] Longmire did not recall a 1965 rule on cockpit door closure, nor did he recall pre-9/11 discussions of cockpit door hardening. Subsequent to 9/11, the FAA turned to the Israeli experience with respect to door hardening.

[U] Up until 9/11, the training protocols provided for the cockpit crew to come back into the cabin to deal with "air rage" incidents, and there were frequent discussions within FAA as to whether such protocols should fall under the purview of Flight Standards or Security, with the latter only to become involved if the incident included a threat of assault. Only when there was a threat to the aircraft would the case be regarded as one of "hijacking." In hijackings, the main purpose of keeping the hijackers out of the cockpit was to allow secure communications with the cockpit crew. There was no belief that a 9/11-type threat was likely.

[U] Longmire recalled some discussion of the "one key fits all" cockpit doors issue, but he didn't recall the requirement that flight attendants were to carry cockpit keys.

Checkpoint Screening

[~~SSI~~] According to Mr. Longmire, the FAA's formal expectation was that the components of the aviation security system would achieve 100% compliance with FAA regulations. He commented, "If you don't expect 100%, you'll get what they (the airlines) expect." However, he added that the reality of screening was that to achieve 100% detection would require extra time for processing passengers, and greater intrusion into the personal belongings of passengers, and would "shut down the transportation system." The FAA could only take decisive action if and when a "deadly or dangerous weapon" got through.

[~~SSI~~] Longmire explained that some carry-on items prohibited by FAA weren't [REDACTED] He reported that failure to detect prohibited items in the screening process could produce FAA actions, but that "the only things we got them to pay attention to" were the things FAA tested, including [REDACTED] [REDACTED] If an item was not tested, compliance went down, and conversely testing brought compliance rates up. According

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to Longmire, "It was human nature. People are going to focus on what you are testing them on."

[SSI] Longmire indicated that both regular and Special Assessments ("Red Team") testing focused on areas of compliance problems.

Hijackings

[SSI] The aviation security system was looking primarily for hijackers with guns, and bombs and [REDACTED] according to Longmire. He believed that the industry was not self-motivated to make sure the security system was up to par, but they thought they could handle hijackings, either by letting the hijackers go to their destination of choice or by having the FBI launch a hostage rescue operation. Longmire himself felt that the system had a fairly high likelihood [REDACTED] of detecting the [REDACTED] but if deterrence and detection failed, the "common strategy" would mitigate the consequences of a successful hijacking.

Summer of 2001

[U] Longmire didn't have a role in the 2001 rulemaking on revising FAR 107 and 108, but at the time, he didn't believe we had a significant threat to domestic civil aviation. He believed the FBI assessments that the domestic threat was under control, with a greater threat overseas. Under these circumstances, he thinks that the Bojinka threat posited in the 7/01 rulemaking was used more for cost-benefit justification for the security measures it encompassed.

[U] In the summer of 2001, Longmire was focused on responding to getting "beat up" in GAO and Inspector General reports. He saw no intelligence that led him to change deployment plans. Had he seen such information, he would have increased testing to try to ratchet up compliance with FAA regulations.

Events of 9/11

[U] Longmire was notified in his office that Air Traffic Control (ATC) had lost contact with some aircraft that morning. He immediately went to the FAA Command Center prior to the first crash, which he subsequently saw reported on CNN. At that point, however, he thought the crash was a General Aviation aircraft, and not connected with the airliners which ATC had lost contact with. The loss of a transponder signal on the latter had made the loss of contact a particular concern, and Longmire could not recall any previous such situation.

[U] Deputy Administrator Belger came to the Command Center shortly after Longmire, and then the second plane hit the WTC, but "we still didn't know what we had," according to Longmire. At this point, ATC was reporting loss of contact with other aircraft. Jeff Griffith (of ATC) was trying to work out what was going on.

[U] In such circumstances, Longmire's role was to run the FAA Command Center. He was trying to get specifics through communicating with airline security managers (via the FAA Principal Security Investigators, or PSI's). Fran Lozito was Longmire's acting deputy that day, and Mike Weichert was serving as a Crisis Management specialist.

[U] The next key events that morning were the standing up of the SVTS, with the White House and Secretary Mineta included on the line, and the imposition of a national ground stop of all aviation, which Jeff Griffith took the lead in implementing. The Command Center was to work primarily on security issues and to facilitate communications flow. However, it was designed to handle traditional hijackings.

[U] Longmire reported that it was primarily his responsibility to coordinate FAA's response to a hijacking, with ACS-1 (Canavan) working primarily with higher-level Administration officials, including the Secretary of Transportation. ATC was responsible for clearing airspace, communicating with the aircraft, and implementing the ground stop.

[U] With respect to the military, Longmire indicated that it was standard procedure to pull the military into the communications link as soon as possible so they could monitor the aircraft. (He did not recall any pre-9/11 discussions of assigning the military with any hijacking role other than tracking the aircraft.) The linkup from the FAA Command Center was supposed to be with the National Military Command Center (NMCC). It was Longmire's expectation that both NMCC and the FBI should have been included in the communications link as soon as the Command Center was stood up. He later learned that this didn't occur, but he wasn't sure when the situation was rectified. The FAA Watch was responsible for setting up the communications network. As to the taping of Command Center communications on 9/11, Longmire reported that the center was new and he was not sure if they the capability.

[U] Longmire recalled that Monte Belger was Acting Administrator that morning because Administrator Garvey was away from the building. Most of Longmire's dealings with senior officials on 9/11 were with Belger and Lynne Osmus. As indicated previously, Belger came to the Command Center between the crashes of Flights AAL #11 and UAL #175. Ms. Garvey returned to the FAA building shortly thereafter, with Secretary Mineta. Most of Garvey's time at the FAA that day was spent in the SVTS, but she did pass through the Command Center, and while most of Longmire's direct contact was with Belger, he was very aware that Garvey was "around."

[U] Once the ground stop was ordered, Longmire's concern was in getting the aircraft on the ground. He didn't recall any discussion at that point of screening grounded passengers, but in retrospect, he thinks that would have been a good thing to do. Longmire also did not recall any credible reports on other 9/11 hijacking plots.

No-Fly Lists and Watchlists

[U] Longmire indicated that prior to 9/11, ACI would occasionally get information on suspicious individuals from FBI and CIA, and the names of those individuals would then

be placed in Security Directives (SD's), with specific requirements (such as preventing them from flying or keeping them under observation while in transit). Shortly after 9/11 (perhaps as soon as 9/12), Longmire recalls receiving an expanded list of such names from the FBI and CIA (again via ACI). These were initially put into SD's, but then they were placed on a separate, updated list ("No Fly list").

[~~SSI~~] Longmire was not sure how the FBI and CIA generated the immediate post-9/11 list of names; however, he reported that to get on such a list – before or after 9/11 – the individual would have to pose a specific threat to civil aviation.

9/11 Closed by Statute

Longmire was not aware of the source of author Stephen Brill's claim that a list of terrorist suspects was received by the FAA prior to 9/11; he reiterated that he didn't get those names until after 9/11.

[U] Longmire believes that if the FBI had come forward, prior to 9/11, with a list of known terrorists, even if there was no specific threat information linked to civil aviation, the FAA would have taken precautionary action, and he could "not imagine" it being otherwise. He reported that, historically, the FAA had received "push back" from the airlines when it sought increased security measures, and he thought it a "safe bet" that such would have been the case here. It was Longmire's expectation that the FAA 24-hour watch would always be in the loop with respect to threat information on terrorists.

Current Aviation Security System and Recommendations

[U] Longmire believes TSA is going in the right direction, but that it has proved difficult to get Congress to see that it isn't easy to accomplish the security mission.

[U] Longmire supports retaining federal responsibility for screening. They are better able to deal with quality control issues now than under the previous system. He believes that whenever one utilizes contractors, eventually it will revert to the "lowest bidder," and that it is inherently harder to control contractors. He does believe TSA needs to retain its current flexibility in removing poor performers. Furthermore, he thinks TSA currently has the right benefits and the right pay to keep screeners on the job, and to avoid the old system's high turnover problem.

[U] Longmire opposes the Congressional cap on screening positions as artificial and believes that, in fact, more screeners are needed because they are being required to do more than under the previous system. He believes the number of screeners should be based on factors like passenger load and throughput requirements, perhaps with a third party (such as the National Academy of Sciences) validating the results.

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9/11 Closed by Statute

[U] He believes that industry has succeeded in making sure anything costly in the way of security has been shifted to the federal government. Furthermore, in response to numerous congressionally imposed mandates, TSA has been unable to focus on long-range issues because it has been forced to deal with these deadlines.

[U] Longmire supports provision of sufficient resources, personnel and R&D investments to begin identifying and moving toward the "checkpoint of the future."

9/11 Hijacker Tactics

[U] Longmire believes that all four sets of hijackers used similar tactics and weapons. They sought out flights with few passengers that would be easier to take over, used box cutters to take control, flew the aircraft to the target and crashed them. He had an awareness of their objectives on 9/11, but learned more of the "how" later from internal reports and discussions.

[U] With respect to reports of a gun use on 9/11, Longmire sourced the report too early in the day from the AAL security office to the FAA's PSI for AAL. Longmire recalls asking for follow-up by the PSI (Janet Riffe) to clarify certain discrepancies, and he pointed out that it is not unusual for first reports to be inaccurate. He recalled the report being written up, and is convinced that Ms. Riffe heard the account from AAL. He speculated that perhaps whoever took the call at AAL for the flight attendant "expected" to hear of gun use in a hijacking. Longmire didn't recall when the discrepancy was resolved, but it was his hope and expectation that any changes in the report would have noted the original content and specified the change. He recalls only the one gun report on 9/11.

[U] Longmire did not recall any 9/11 discussions as to notification of the cockpits of other flights. Under the protocols then in place, during a hijacking ATC was to have said as little as possible. In retrospect, Longmire believes it would have made sense for there to have been discussions on this issue on 9/11 among senior decision-makers such as the Secretary, the Administrator and the Deputy Administrator.