

MEMORANDUM FOR THE RECORD

Event: North Eastern Air Defense Sector (NEADS) field site visit

Type of event: Interview with the personnel from Huntress ID

Date: Monday, October 27, 2003

Special Access Issues: Clearance check

Prepared by: Geoffrey Brown

Team Number: 8

Location: Commander's Conference Room, Building 102

Participants - Non-Commission: TSgt. Shelley Watson, SSgt. Stacie Rountree, MSgt. Dooley, Identification Technicians, and Lt. Col. Fred Davies, Esq. (National Guard)

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

Note: Please refer to the recorded interview for further details.

Background:

Dooley, the senior officer of the three Huntress ID technicians Commission staff spoke with during this interview, informed Commission staff that she joined the Air Force as an aircraft mechanic in North Carolina in 1984. She began with the National Guard in 1995. She has been an ID Technician for eight years, and was trained for the position at NEADS. Watson started in 1985 as a reservist. She joined NEADS in 1995. She has worked in Surveillance for 4 years. In 1988 Rountree joined the National Guard in Mississippi and worked at WADS. In January of 2001 she was ID Desk qualified at NEADS.

The interviewees (Huntress ID) were all three on duty for the Vigilant Guardian exercise that was scheduled for September 11, 2001 (9/11). This is the normal shift staffing for ID Technicians.

Exercises and Training:

Huntress ID noted to Commission staff that they have participated in hijack training scenarios – mostly for flights inbound from overseas – but had never exercised a hijack overland. The procedure for response that they were familiar with in the case of a hijack entailed establishing a visual identification of the target by a fighter. The time they had to do so would depend on whether or not the target was squawking. If there are multiple mode 3s, or if it was a primary target only, then the time frame to establish a positive identification would be complicated. If the flight is over water the time limit is roughly 2 minutes to 5 minutes once the flight passes the “core line” (a specific distance from the coast at which the priority of the event is escalated). There is no time limit overland.

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The scenarios practiced before 9/11 most frequently that involved finding an aircraft that was a primary target were practiced; but most of those scenarios would be over water. Even in the drug interdiction context they were not allowed to take military action with anything over domestic airspace.

They at times had joint exercises with the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA). It depended on the type of exercise as to whether actual FAA employees were involved. Dooley noted to Commission staff that prior to 9/11 she had "worked" the "tail end" of a hijack, but has no recollection of it.

At the ID Area, Dooley stands behind Watson and Rountree. Both Watson and Rountree feed information from their desks, and from their conversations as "HUNTRESS ID" with different agencies to Dooley.

9/11: American Airlines 11

Huntress ID had the opportunity to color code the one transcript provided to Commission staff that serves as a record of the communications at the ID Desk, and provided that said marked transcript for Commission staff's reference.

Commission staff began a review of the transcript in conjunction with an audio file recording provided by NEADS for the field site visit. The recording was marked "DRM1 DAT2 Channel 4 ID Op". This review progressed as follows:

The ID desk has direct lines to the sector FAA centers. According to Huntress ID through these lines the ID desk they operate is able to receive the appropriate information from any of the sectors that receive a report of an air event. They noted that they occasionally recognize who they speak with at Boston Air Route Control Center (ZBW) – especially the Military Operations Specialist (MOS) position. Huntress ID also noted that New York Air Route Control Center (ZNY) has Navigation Aids out of the oceanic sector that are "point out" areas that help facilitate the communication between NEADS ID and the FAA.

In their attempts to locate information regarding AA 11, the following details emerged:

At the point in which the ID desk was attempting to get a Mode three beacon code from the FAA controller at ZBW, the ZBW controller was looking for altitude, and kept giving them a Mode C. Watson was looking for the original beacon code. Watson notes to Commission staff that post 9/11 the ID desk can bring up history on an aircraft from the beacon code.

Commission staff was informed that Mode C is the altitude, and that Mode Three is the beacon code. [Commission staff believes further analysis and interviews will show that the military and the FAA spoke a "different language" in their attempts to locate AA

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11, and it is quite probable that this barrier in communication led to delays in the transferring of vital information.]

Huntress ID was fed the last known altitude of flight AA 11 from the FAA. Watson referred to a specific radar, J53 (which Commission staff knows was down for maintenance – but is overlapped in coverage), as a point from which the ID desk attempted to locate the target. Huntress ID related to Commission staff that ZBW did “eventually” relay the correct originally assigned beacon code of 1443.

Huntress ID identified AA 11 had a possible heading towards John F. Kennedy Airport at the 19:30 mark on the audio file. They looked for a confirmation of the tail number, and an updated latitude and longitude position. That information was relayed to Surveillance and the MCC. They used this information to locate the primary target. They asked for a possible update every three to five minutes on the latitude and longitude on the aircraft from the FAA. ZBW told the ID desk that AA 11’s primary began to track as a “coast”. [From the recording it appears to commission staff that the ID desk did not know what the FAA term “coast mode” meant. Commission staff believes the ID desk thought the use of the word “coast” indicated the flight was traveling along the eastern U.S. coastline.]

CONR (Continental United States Aerospace Defense Region)’s public affairs officer called for information on the hijacking. The public affairs officer relayed to Rountree that an aircraft had hit the World Trade Center.

Huntress ID commented to Commission staff that they received confirmation that AA 11 had hit the WTC from ZBW. Huntress ID received “November 334 Alpha Alpha” as the tail number for AA 11. Rountree believes that the only person she would have spoken to at ZBW was the Boston Military Operations Supervisor.

Commission staff discussed with Dooley, Watson and Rountree the 36:17 mark on the audio file. After further review on the next day, Tuesday, October 28th, based on a tape provided labeled audio file mark DRM 1 DAT 2 Channel 7 ID2, Commission staff clarifies there is confirmation from Dooley stating “AA 11 into World Trade Center”.

Phantom AA 11:

Watson does not recall where a call came from relaying that AA 11 had not hit the WTC (World Trade Center).

Regarding the information that AA 11 was not the aircraft that hit the WTC, and that it had gone through and headed south (56:49 mark on audio file), Dooley stated to commission staff that “one of the centers” passed that information. They spoke to Cleveland, Boston, New York and Washington Centers. Watson states that they may have spoken with the Chicago Center later in the day.

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Dooley stated to Commission staff that she was not comfortable indicating to Commission staff exactly who made the call that AA 11 was still airborne. Dooley states that the majority of their calls on 9/11 were with the FAA.

9/11: United Airlines Flight 175 (UAL 175)

According to the information provided to Commission staff by NEADS, at 13:03:20 UTC there was a report of a possible second hijacking. The other aircraft is identified as UAL 175. Rountree received that information from ZNY. ZBW informed Huntress ID that Boston has shut down its airspace (40:30 audio file).

According to Huntress ID, not long thereafter ZNY gave the Weapons Desk the information that UAL 175 was the second aircraft to hit the WTC.

Huntress ID receives information at the 01:00:50 mark in the audio file that ZBW is "missing" another aircraft.

Dooley does not recall information regarding AA 11 being fed down to the Huntress ID from the MCC.

Huntress ID relayed to ZBW the information that two aircraft hit the WTC and that one aircraft, presumably AA 11, was still headed to Washington, DC. They believe there is a level of certainty that UAL 175 was the second aircraft to strike the WTC. The spent time attempting to locate AA 11 with latitude and longitude at the different FAA centers, in particular ZBW. ZBW informed Huntress ID that they believed there were three aircraft out of ZBW that were missing. Huntress ID interpreted that ZBW was incorrect and AA 11 was still airborne and headed to Washington, DC. This is the information that Huntress ID relayed to the Washington Center Operations Manager. Huntress ID gave a last known latitude and longitude for AA 11. Washington told Huntress ID information originated from Indianapolis Center that AA 77 was missing – a 767 – possibly out of Boston as well.

Huntress ID contacted Indianapolis looking for a heading and speed on AA 77. They attempted to locate a latitude and longitude. Indianapolis gave them a bearing and range off a certain point (York). York was not one of their navigational aids, so they looked for the more accurate latitude and longitude indicators.

They began looking for a Delta 89 (Note: the flight is actually Delta 1989) as another hijack. They found it on the scope and had him as a "confirmed hijack". They originally believed Delta 89 was on a flight path to Las Vegas, but then realized it was to Los Angeles. They marked it as a "Special" flight for tracking purposes. They informed Cleveland Center of Delta 89's status and that it was in Cleveland Center. They gave Cleveland Center the information that it was headed to Los Vegas, not Los Angeles. They were informed that it was actually Delta 1989, and they gave Cleveland Major Nasypany's contact number.

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At the 01:23:00 mark on the audio file Huntress ID first mentions that the Pentagon was hit.

There is conversation on the audio file regarding attempts to have Toledo field fighters at the 01:25-26:00 mark.

After the conversation occurs on the audiotape, Watson and Dooley note to Commission staff that "Raymond" wrote down all the information they logged on their plexi glass boards. They do not know what happened to this information. Watson notes that the base has the address for the person who took down this information. They believe he is currently in Canada.

13 hours 58 minutes time signature occurs at the 01:32:00 mark in the audio file.

Commission staff stops questioning Huntress ID interviewees on the audio file at this point. (01:37:18)

Dooley stated to Commission staff that the mechanics of training "kept us going" through the events of the day. Watson agreed that the whole floor worked well together on 9/11. Post 9/11, Dooley and Watson were both interviewed by the media. Watson mentions *Aviation Weekly* in particular. They note that Colonel Blaney has the media coverage in file, and this may have already been provided to Commission staff.

Watson notes to Commission staff that there are several new pieces of equipment to help ID an aircraft. Some of this equipment is compatible in function with FAA equipment.

Dzuiban, a Huntress ID member on 9/11 and a mission crew technician now, is currently in Alaska.

Dooley states that everyone, including the FAA, did the best they could to relay accurate information.

Pre-9/11 the FAA looks for aircraft via point and variant range, and the military looked for ID by beacon code. Now they understand each others' methods.

The FAA looks at routes. Pre-9/11 the military would need a point out from a specific site. When the FAA was involved with military exercises, the majority of the time the FAA was instructed to give inaccurate, or no information on the military aircraft playing the hijacked aircraft in the scenario. Now there is a FAA representative that is familiar with all the FAA terminology. After 9/11 Rountree has the understanding that the Oceanic sector of ZNY checks on flight plans that are coordinated to preplanned check in times. They came to this information post-9/11.

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Regarding the "rebirth" of AA 11, Huntress ID members were not willing to speculate on how the false information was circulated. In fact, one Huntress ID member attempted to postulate, but then was told not to by her superior.

Huntress ID senior staff was not happy with Washington Center, or with New York Center. Rountree was extremely enthusiastic towards ZBW's efforts on 9/11.

Dooley was "given advice" prior to her meeting with the media. Dooley claims she was informed only to tell what she knew on 9/11. NORAD did send a representative to her media sessions. She said that she did not answer questions she "shouldn't answer or couldn't answer."

Rountree was the youngest member of the staff on 9/11 – she had been qualified for 8 months.

Dooley states that information was also entering the Battle Cap regarding AA 11 that may not have been available to Huntress ID.

Watson states that both voice recorders and data reduction information is recorded and kept. Watson notes that open line communication is heard and no classified material is allowed through.

Record of events:

Huntress ID stated to Commission staff that they had running logs written on plexi-glass to record their actions and the flow of information on 9/11. According to the three, there was no hand written notes preserved. They have written forms in which they log aircraft information, but that is the only notation they take.

Post 9/11:

Rountree noted to Commission staff that Huntress ID now speaks to the FAA Tracons more often, but on 9/11 they did not speak with them at all (as far as they recollect).
