

MEMORANDUM FOR THE RECORD

(R)

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

Type of event: Interview

Date: Wednesday, October 29, 2003

Special Access Issues: Clearance check

Prepared by: Geoffrey Brown

Team Number: 8

Location: Commander's Conference Room, Building 102

Participants - Non-Commission: Colonel Ian Sanderson, Collins

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

Sanderson has over 20 years of military service. The first half was with B52s as a Radar Navigator. He transitioned to the Air National Guard around 1993 in Syracuse. When NEADS transferred to an Air National Guard operation he transferred over. In this sector he has held the position of Transition Team Chief, as a Weapons Director, SOCC Director, and as a DOC, among others.

On 9/11 he was starting his training as a Fighter Director.

The SOCC Director is an internal look at the operations on the SOCC floor. It involves manning and procedures of floor operations. Administratively the floor operatives and co-ordination with the DO is under the SOCC Director's responsibility.

The DO is responsible for all the sector operations, at both internal and external communications. He coordinates with his counterpart at 1st Air Force. The DO on 9/11 was Colonel McNealy

Major Carle is responsible for the qualification of personnel fulfilling functions on the floor. Major Nasypany as the Flight Commander has the responsibility of being intimate with his people on establishing what roles his staff may be ready to train for.

The Delta Flight, which is the Weapons sector, has its own Flight Commander. On 9/11 Ryczak was in this position, but may or may not have been present.

Mission Crew Commander on the Operations Floor runs the floor. Alpha flight Major Nasypany was the MCC and the Flight Commander. The MCC is on the operations level; flight commander is on the administrative level.

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On 9/11 Sanderson was scheduled to partake in his first exercise to learn the Fighter Officer function. Colonel Marr was the Battle Commander. Present at the Battle Cab on 9/11 were Lt. Colonel Deskins, in or learning the ACO position, as far as Sanderson remembers; Lt. Col Mark Stewart (a Major on 9/11) was in the Chief of Intel position; and Major Anderson was there later in the day.

Sanderson arrived at 7:15 AM for a 7:30 AM brief to prepare for the NORAD exercise that would probably have been "fairly uneventful". At the first received word of a possible hijack from the operations floor, Sanderson's instinct was to allow the proper flow of decision making and command to flow at its proper pace. If the exercise had not been planned there would not have been any staffing in the Battle Cab. If there had not been a Battle Cab formed, then a call would have been placed to the DO and the Battle Cab would have formed. It would only have taken a few minutes once it was understood that it was a serious incident.

On 9/11 the Battle Cab had regular phone connections and some STU 3 connections to their counterparts in CONR and NORAD. Sanderson is not completely confident in this. Typically the information from the Operations Floor has chat lines and communications with CONR. Sanderson does not remember if all the communications in the Battle Cab were operational through real-world means. The Battle Cab certainly had the telephone lines, but he does not know if the chat lines were in exercise mode or real-world mode.

On the Operations Floor the MCC or the MCC Tech enters information into the chat log. Sanderson states that he does not believe any lines were recorded on 9/11 from the Battle Cab.

Sanderson believes that 9/11 was to be the first day of the Vigilant Guardian exercise.

Sanderson's first inclination, after the first tower hit, was to "step back and let everyone do their jobs." He noted that he could tell there was some trouble. Sanderson relates that his sense of what was going on was from the floors. He could hear that there was trouble finding and labeling the tracks. He could hear a good deal of conversation between the floor and the FAA.

Because of the overwhelming activity on 9/11 Sanderson described his memory as "hazy"; there was intense telephone work ongoing.

At one point during the activity Sanderson went to his office to do paperwork. He went to Colonel Cleveland and asked for a recall of the staff.

His recollection of the day is relatively jumbled. The next task was to try and contact fighter wings and building crews at the same time. He started calling Air National Guard Bases. He had to get the right offices for the different people on his list. He would call those Bases to draw upon for assets; including calling bases that were not ROARD assets.

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Sanderson, as a professional military officer, does not know why the military did not draw upon the assets of the Air National Guard. Intuitively he knew the mechanism used to keep the fighters going needed to be sourced.

Sanderson retained nothing that he created in the battle cab on 9/11. No one else receive a log on what they were responsible for on 9/11, or a record as far as he knows, of the after action reports of the day.

When the Battle Cab "stood up" on 9/11, it never "stood down."

There is a point in which FAA and NORAD transferred to Noble Eagle.

Sanderson suggests Commission Staff speak with the Battle Staff themselves.

Sanderson is unaware of the paper trail that would be left by the transcriber from AFB. He does not know who is responsible for this at NEADS, and is only vaguely aware of the problem with the tapes that were being transcribed. He does not know who made the decision to bring the transcriber in.

On 9/11 Sanderson was responsible for ensuring that the floor had additional personnel, he was also responsible for coordinating additional fighter assets from other bases.

There is a flow between the Battle Cab and the Operational Floor. The feedback is immediate between the two. After 9/11 the "feedback" on what worked best was more immediate on a day to day basis. It was twelve hour shifts for a good deal of time, and within that the sense of what was happening became blurred. There were constant missions to patrol the air caps, etc. and there was no time to assess that first day. Sanderson does not recall taken the time to do such a thing.

The effort to recover the data from the tapes was around the 21st of December according to Commission staff. Sanderson does not remember sitting Alpha Flight down and running a review of the day. He does not recall Major Nasypany performing on either.

Sanderson explains that after exercises there are after-action productions, but since the events ongoing since 9/11 are being responded to, addressed, and reassessed on a daily basis at an informal constantly revising level, there is no direct assessment of what came from the events of 9/11.

Sanderson does not recall having file folders at the operational floor to collect best practices notes after 9/11. Sanderson explains that this step is taken after exercises on a more leisurely basis.

Hijack exercises were conducted several times a year as far as Sanderson recalls; though he cannot remember specific scenarios. He can not specifically remember a scenario practiced of a hijack within US airspace; a scenario that involve multiple hijacks; nor a scenario in which an airplane would be used as a weapon.

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Authority for Intercept Operations (AFIO) on 9/11 is not recalled by Sanderson. It would have involved a conversation by Marr with CONR.

Sanderson explains that he was primarily concerned with calling back the operations personnel. He notes that since he was not qualified for the position, he immediately took on the floor of making sure that he could assist, and not overrun the floor.

As the rules of engagement changed he would be updated on the emergency action update slide, but he would not have been involved in the conversation to initiate emergency actions.

Sanderson is shown a transcript from the MCC position that was provided to the Commission staff from NEADS. Sanderson explains to staff some of the names described in the transcript. One of the names is Steve Culbertson, who in the transcript was attempting to gain access to a STU 3 line from Sanderson's office. Sanderson only vaguely recalls any of these details. Culbertson is the only FAA liaison. Commission staff in this line of questioning is attempting to find details on why the FAA liaison is looking for a STU line at the same time the Huntress ID section is feverishly speaking with the FAA Centers.

Sanderson noted that the working relationship with the FAA is usually smooth, and is not aware of any of the tensions on the floor that day between NEADS and FAA.

Sanderson explains to Commission staff that on 9/11 the significance of the event required all staff to be present for the Weapons Desk to man the Langley flights.

Sanderson's function on 9/11 was in part to stay out of everyone's way. In wartime, there really is no function for the SOCC Director. He was "parental" to the personnel, but did not interfere. He filled in on positions and functions that the DO saw needed more attention.

The pace of operations and the heightened sense of security, and the heightened sense of what can potentially happen each day is the major change since 9/11. Sanderson believes that NEADS has "evolved the right way since that morning." They've evolved in that there is a Battle Staff 24/7. There is more of a continuous loop between the Battle Cab and the Operations floor. The communication with CONR is more seem-less. There are conference calls with General McKinley.

If the Battle Staff was not there on 9/11 Sanderson believes that the Operational Floor would have functioned the same way. The value added of the Battle Staff being there is that key figures of authority were there and ready to respond.

Operations were complicated, in Sanderson's opinion, by the fact that the planes turned their Mode 3 off.

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