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**MEMORANDUM FOR THE RECORD**

Event: Interview of Peter Schurott, Supervisor of the Newark CASFU (Civil Aviation Security Field Unit) on 9/11/2001

Type: Interview (conference call)

Date: March 3, 2004

Special Access Issues: None

Prepared by: John Raidt

Team: 7

Participants (non-Commission): Peter Schurott; Mary McCarthy (FAA General Counsel's office).

Participants (Commission): John Raidt and Bill Johnstone

Location: Conference call held with Schurott from the GSA conference room.

**Background**

[U] Prior to 1998 Schurott had worked as a port security officer (private contractor) in Brooklyn. He was hired in 1998 by the FAA as a Civil Aviation Security specialist at the Newark CASFU. After one and one-half years in that position he volunteered to serve as acting supervisor of the CASFU. In 2000 he was named as the Supervisor (which is the top position in a CASFU). He served in this capacity until January of 2003 when he signed on with FAA's Hazardous Material division in Newark, which is where he currently works.

**Security at Newark**

[U] Schurott indicated that the CASFU conducted Special Emphasis Assessments (SEA's) to examine the compliance by air carriers and airports with federal aviation security rules including Positive Passenger Bag Match; controlling access to Aviation Operations Area; and checkpoint operations. In addition, the CASFU would conduct monthly testing of the checkpoints at the airport.

[U] He said that the results of the SEA's and monthly checkpoint testing at Newark were "not bad." He said he couldn't really compare the results to other airports, but at Newark they had "good days" and "bad days." He said that turnover in checkpoint screeners was a big problem. He found the airlines at Newark to be attentive to security, and he had a good relationship with them. He had no major complaints.

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**Federal Security Manager**

[U] The FSM (Russell White) and the CASFU shared an office and they got along very well. As the CASFU, Schurott reported to the CASFO (Civil Aviation Security Field Office) Supervisor Nora Zaba. Zaba had jurisdiction over aviation security at Newark, JFK and La Guardia.

[U] (Note: Mary McCarthy said that she will find out from Nora Zaba whether the checkpoints at La Guardia enforced a prohibition on knives with 3 ½ inch blades rather than the 4 inch standard because 3 ½ inches was the law in New York City).

**United Checkpoint**

[U] Schurott said that the United checkpoint through which the UAL 93 hijackers passed on 9-11 had explosive trace detection (ETD) equipment that was used to randomly check carry-on items. He said that checkpoints, which had such equipment, were required to conduct "random and continuous" testing of carry-on items with it, in lieu of "random and continuous" hand searches of carry-on bags as required by the Air Carrier Standard Security Program. He agreed that the FAA would have had to issue a Security Directive allowing the ETD testing to replace the hand searches. However, he couldn't identify what Security Directive might have done this.

[U] He stated that it was very difficult to get the air carriers to comply with "random and continuous" screening of carry-on bags—whether by hand searching or ETD. He said that the carriers didn't want to slow the system down. Carriers were interested in getting people through the checkpoint and on to the planes.

[U] He said that the reason explosive trace detection (ETD) was emphasized more than hand searches for "deadly or dangerous" weapons in carry-ons, is that FAA thought that an explosive could bring a plane down which was of higher consequence than a weapon that might escape x-ray detection.

[U] He said that United used CTX machines to examine checked bags for explosives at Newark, rather than PPBM.

**X-ray**

[U] Schurott said that it is not easy to distinguish certain weapons and prohibited items from common items.

9/11 Closed by Statute

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### Suspicious activities

[U] Schurott said that there was no indication of terrorist surveillance at Newark. Suspicious activities went to the Port Authority police. Other reports may have gone to the FSM or the FBI, but he didn't receive them.

[U] Schurott attended the monthly consortia meetings, as did [redacted] who was the FBI's liaison to the airport. Schurott said that he never received any information at the consortia or anywhere else about the presence of terrorist groups in the area. He was not aware that terrorists were present or active in the vicinity of Newark.

### 9-11 the Day

[U] Schurott said that a K-9 officer told him that he heard that either a Cessna or a helicopter hit the WTC. He and some of his colleagues turned on the television but the TV went out before the second aircraft struck. He called Nora Zaba at the CASFO office to see if she were aware of the situation. She told Schurott that she had heard reports about hijackings. Schurott spent the day collecting information as directed by Zaba. He obtained the manifest for UAL #93, checkpoint logs, and the list of CAPPS' selectees. In addition he conducted interviews with the fueling people, catering and others who serviced UAL 93. He said that none of the information he received in the interviews indicated anything abnormal or suspicious. He was not assigned to collect information on any flights other than UAL 93, and he doesn't know of anyone else who was asked to look at other flights.

[U] Schurott said that the UAL station manager was Terry Rizzuto. In retrospect he can't think of anything that stood out about security at Newark that would encourage terrorists to target the facility.

[U] He said that the only closed circuit television was in Terminal C of the airport (Continental) which was new. The terminal from where UAL #93 departed did not have CCTV.

### Recommendations

[U] Schurott said that the notion of allowing passengers without carry-on bags to have an express lane at the checkpoint would be difficult to implement because of space restrictions at most airports.

[U] He believes that TSA should not only test checked baggage for explosives with CTX machines, but should also exercise Positive Passenger Bag Match as a layered precaution.

[U] He thinks that eliminating carry-on baggage would be a significant aid to security.

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