



MEMORANDUM FOR THE RECORD

Event: Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) Boston Center Field Site Interview 1 with Richard Dion, Regional Operations Officer for Communications Information Security (COMSAT), FAA Regional Operations Center (ROC)

Type of event: Interview

Date: Monday, September 22, 2003

Special Access Issues: None

Prepared by: Geoffrey Brown

Team Number: 8

Location: FAA Boston Center, Nashua, New Hampshire

Participants - Non-Commission: Chris Perito, FAA General Consul

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

NOTE: Please refer to the recorded interview for a complete account.

Dion has been an FAA employee since 1989. Previous to working at the Regional Operation Center (ROC), Dion was an air traffic controller (ATC) at Boston Center and Delornes. On September 11, 2001 Dion had been in his current position, a regional operations officer for communications at the ROC, for four years. Dion reports to Jennifer Donoghue.

Dion explained that there are five permanent full time employees who work at COMSAT, and that on 9/11 he worked the night shift, from 1800 EDT to 0700 EDT on September 12, 2001.

According to Dion, COMSAT's primary function is to set up telephone conferences. They often connect the personnel of the ROC's different divisions: security, air traffic, and flight standards are examples. He estimated half a dozen open line 24 hour conferences were ongoing on 9/11 and thereafter for "a few days". This was unusual for COMSAT.

Dion thought COMSAT's hijack procedures were not very different from the role they play in any other major aircraft event. He noted that the "situation" dictated who to contact and connect. He is unaware of any prioritized list of essential contacts, but knows to call the three main divisions at the ROC: security, flight standards and air traffic. His secondary contact group would be other regional entities. He acknowledged that contacting the Washington Operations Center (WOC) would be a priority. COMSAT does not make notice outside of the FAA unless it is directed to do so by the WOC. The

UNCLASSIFIED
COMMISSION SENSITIVE

only exception to this is to contact the National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB).

COMSAT at ROC is not capable of setting up secure conference calls. That responsibility is the WOC's, and any conference that necessitates a secure line would be set up through the WOC. The ROC does have one secure line though, that can be used for individual callers. The ROC does not routinely record calls, but can do so if notified in advance.

Even though he was not present during the day on 9/11, Dion had some observations regarding the ROC COMSAT from when he arrived at work that evening. He found that the COMSAT response was not very efficient, and that part of its disjointed response was due to a lack of organization (where to find orders/equipment). He believes this capability gap has been bridged in the time since. He is still concerned, however, that COMSAT operates without enough staff. There were four people when Dion came in, at which point he began reviewing the day's notes and got a briefing from his manager.

Dion noted that some of the security and some of the flight standards personnel were given so much to do accomplish that they connected into multiple conference lines, and this caused confusion.

Dion noted that the ROC has military liaisons from the Air Force, Navy and Army. These liaisons operate as the military's voice to the FAA. Dion was not clear on how they would involve themselves in a 9/11 type situation, and was not clear on who their FAA counterparts were.

Dion does not believe COMSAT has a line to the Defense Event Network ("DEN").

Dion is concerned that COMSAT does not get all the equipment necessary to perform its function. He attributes this to a "line of business" attitude in the FAA with its budget.