

COMMISSION SENSITIVE

MEMORANDUM FOR THE RECORD

Event: Interview of Alan Reiss, WTC Director of Department of Operations and Maintenance

Date: Monday, November 3, 2003

Location: Port Authority Offices at 225 Park Avenue South

Prepared by: Sam Caspersen

Team Number: 8b

Participants – non-Commission: Alan Reiss, Port Authority, Deputy Aviation Director; James Begley, Port Authority, Deputy General Counsel

Participants – Commission: Sam Caspersen and John Azzarello (“Staff”)

The interview began with Staff first thanking Reiss for taking the time to discuss these difficult subjects, and then Staff gave a brief overview of the Commission.

Reiss then was asked to summarize his career. After graduating with an electrical engineering degree from college and then working briefly at Con-Ed, he joined the Port Authority. In 1985 he joined the WTC group as an electrical engineer and then rose to the level of supervising engineer. After the '93 bombing he quarterbacked the effort first to get the WTC re-opened to its occupants (which took about 6 weeks) and then to implement all upgrades [which Staff believe were recommended in Kroll Report]. In 1997 he became general manager of operations and life safety. In 1998, in a WTC reorganization, he became director of Tower 1. In 1999 he became Director of Department of Operations and Maintenance, the post he held on 9/11. At this time he was reporting to Port Authority Chief Operating Officer Vanesta Butcher, who reported to CEO Robert Boyle. On November 11, 2001 he took up his current job as Deputy Director of the Port Authority's Aviation Department.

Staff then asked Reiss about his experience during the '93 bombing. He was in his office in basement of tower 1 when the bomb exploded a mere 150 feet away. He felt the concussion wave. He knew immediately that it was a bomb and not a transformer problem. He attempted to go towards the bomb, but pitch black smoke made this impossible. He tries to go to Operations Control Center, which was on that level at that time, but it had been evacuated; so he heads up to the street. He meets Engine and Ladder Ten on West Street, just outside of 1. He tells a battalion chief that this was a bomb, not an accident, transformer or otherwise. The chief then told him that they would have to evacuate the complex. Reiss estimates that this was 5 minutes after the

explosion. The chief asks Reiss to get his blue-prints, which Reiss does and then meets the Chief in the new incident command post ("ICP") across the street in the lobby of the Vista Hotel. The chief is just ripping blue print pages out and allocating them to firefighters who will go up the towers to those floors to make sure evacuation happening. So evacuation begins ASAP. The ICP is moved back to the island in the middle of West St. Because firefighters were so close to all the live wires with massive voltage at bomb crater, the call made to Con-Ed to cut off power. The emergency generators conked out after 20 minutes. So there is no power; intercom system not working; so not easy to contact upper floors, but Reiss says people self-evacuating [consistent with everything Staff has heard]. Reiss says at about 8 PM power restored. At about midnight the primary (cursory, quick glance "hello, anyone here?") search and secondary search (exhaustive looking under desks, etc.) completed. Reiss observed a confrontation between FDNY and NYPD which almost deteriorated into physical violence when FDNY realized that NYPD had sent a helicopter to the roof of 1 without consulting with FDNY or asking for FDNY personnel to participate.

Lessons learned from '93

See Reiss's prepared sheet for comprehensive listing of changes PA made to WTC post '93 bombing [Staff believes most if not all of these changes came from Kroll recommendations, but PA will neither confirm nor deny] Reiss estimates PA spent over \$100 million post '93 bombing in upgrading physical security and egress and increasing security staff. The names Steve Hollowell and John Horn at Kroll are mentioned as the guys who QBed the Kroll Report. In addition to what is listed on Reiss's prepared sheet, he advised us of the following:

- The installation of the FDNY repeater system, which gave full WTC complex coverage, cost \$150,000.
- As for drilling, Reiss mentions WMD drilling, sarin gas drilling anthrax training, elevator out drilling, and five alarm fire on 90th floor of tower 2 drill in summer of 2001 with 30 FDNY companies. Summer and Unique Security did not participate, but OCS Fire Safety Directors did (these security companies' respective roles at WTC is discussed below).
- As for Operations Command Centers, one was installed at level B1, below the towers. In addition, a there was Security Command Center on 22d floor of each tower. And these facilities could back up each other's core functions. In addition, Dave Fealy, who was COO of WTC, had separate command posts on the 64th floor of both towers.
- Reiss speaks briefly re new cameras put in, which very focused in basement garages and on streets out front. Would detect when a car parked street had not moved for a particular period of time as an e.g.
- PA police officers placed on NYPD-FBI JTTF
- On 9/11 the FDNY repeater system was on FDNY city-wide frequency 154.43 [See Ray Simonetti interview for greater detail]

Radios

Dave Galia organized the original PA radios and came up with the concept of lower power systems, which would only work within a mile or so of an installation, but then would allow that frequency to be used elsewhere (e.g., could use same frequency at WTC and at GW Bridge). Pre '93 bombing, at the WTC the police used Whiskey (450), and civilians used X, Y, and Z channels (475). After '93 bombing, some civilians (maintenance) switch to a new channel B. Only a few civilians, including Reiss, had radios which could access police frequency. The WTC Command police desk could broadcast on all frequencies, police and civilian – Operations Command Centers and Security Center on 22d floor each hear and send out on all frequencies

Post Silverstein

Reiss notes that while the Silverstein deal closed in July of 2001, the contract had been signed in early spring (Reiss thinks probably early April), and after the contract was signed, the Port Authority personnel began to train up their Silverstein successors. By 9-11, according to Reiss, Silverstein's people were ready to take the reigns in some departments, but not in others. In fact Silverstein was reimbursing the Port Authority for the cash and benefits of some Port Authority employees who were continuing to work in their old jobs; these individuals were on what was known as the "Silverstein transition team." These employees felt they were on a pro-longed job interview and many were hoping to be offered jobs by Silverstein. Reiss was not on the transition team. John O'Niell was brought in post closing to replace Richard Coorigan [Coorigan or Copolov – same guy; need to clear up spelling] as head of security [Both O'Neil and Coorigan died on 9/11]. Jeff Warden was going to run the WTC for Silverstein, but he was more of a business executive/finance guy; ____ Chcha was Silverstein's top operations' guy, and he was the one Reiss dealt with.

PA Contractors who would be involved in emergency response

- OCS Security (Deputy Fire Safety Directors in each tower)
- Summit Security (general building security - probably about 60 or a bit more on duty during business hours)
- Unique Security (visitor ID/security probably about 35 on duty during business hours)
- Ace – ran the elevators
- ABM (American Building Maintenance)
 - mechanical staff (manned fire-pumps in sub-basements, 7th, 41st, 75th and 108th floor of both towers; also would take FDNY orders to switch fans to "smoke purge" setting)
 - electrical staff
 - elevator starter and stopper unit

Status of Roof-top Entrances on 9/11

At this point Reiss discussed in detail the doors to the roof tops. To gain access to the roof, one had to first gain access to the 110th floor, which building occupants could not do. Once on the 110th floor, one had to pass through two doors, which were separated by a small stairwell, in order to access the roof. Each of these doors had both an electronic card key lock and a traditional key lock. In event of a power outage, the electronic card key would unlock, but one would still need the traditional key, which no building tenant had. Those who regularly accessed the roof, e.g., window washers, had copies, as of course building security did, with a backup set of all keys to entire complex kept in Operations Command Center. Reiss said that the thinking is that in a fire you want to go down, not up, because fire, heat and toxins go up.

Reiss's Day on 9/11

Reiss's office was on the 88th floor of Tower 1 and on 9/11 he got to work at about 7:15 AM. Fortunately for him, he was with a few PA colleagues having coffee in the concourse at a coffee shop when Flight 11 hit tower 1. He knew something had happened, but wasn't sure what. Reiss goes up escalator to Church St. He sees burning paper falling from the sky, and – with his '93 experience – is thinking bomb. He goes to Police Desk in Building 5, and Officer Murray, who is handling dispatch, tells him that a missile had been fired from the Woolworth Building. Reiss and a detective named Richey Poor go outside to do an assessment for Murray, and, upon surveying tower 1, Reiss immediately knew it was not a missile, because it had caused way too much damage, and the hole in the 1 was way too big. In addition, "we saw plane parts – from a big fucking plane." At this time bodies (jumpers) already were coming down. Reiss helps Poor, who is thinking evidence collection, drag a plane part back to Murray. Reiss doesn't know what to think – perhaps a tragic accident despite the clear sky of that morning. Back at the Police Desk, Reiss starts to answer the phone, but not the police radio, which Murray controlling. Murray has Reiss handle calls from VIPs as well as others. Occasionally Reiss would take a break from his phone duties in order to help an injured person to Millennium Hotel, where EMS would take over. At the police desk Reiss and Murray and the several other PA police present were trying to put together the jigsaw puzzle of what was happening, e.g., we learned that the elevators were out in Tower 1. Reiss has no recollection of Murray taking Whitaker's or DeVona's evacuation calls. Calls coming in from Windows of World; so power is still on there. Somewhere in this period, Reiss heard a boom, goes out into the plaza and sees that 2 has been hit. Reiss then thinks, "We've been attacked, and we are at war." Back at the Police Desk Reiss hears rumors swirling of additional planes coming. Eventually an incredibly loud sound pierced the air – much louder than Reiss remembers the '93 bomb being. "We didn't know what it was, but we knew it was awful." [This was 2 collapsing] Power then went out at the police desk. Both the front and back doors of the Police Command were blocked by debris. The police officers took out an axe and cleared an exit through the front door. Reiss, Murray, and the other officers exit, pick up some civilian types and head to Boarder Books in plaza level, exit on Church and Vesey and go to Post Office. An ATF agent there doesn't want Reiss to leave, but he does anyway, and John Malk, a

PA civilian, follows him. Reiss and Malk way to West Broadway and Barclay, and Reiss look back and see that 2 is just gone, and this is how/when he learns of the collapse. Reiss estimates this is about 20 minutes after 2 collapsed. Reiss heads south of West St., towards PA Command Vehicle (a bus), which is a bit north of Vesey. Reiss sees Capt. Whitaker and PA architect Carla Banachi. They tell him the command vehicle is going to be backed up further north. Reiss learns that Chief Morris is holding PAPD officers in reserve further north until the situation is evaluated, and in retrospect Reiss believes this decision most certainly saved lives of at least some of those officers held back. Whitaker asks Reiss to do an assessment of 1's viability. So Reiss and Whitaker walk a bit south to Vesey, and Reiss says it doesn't look structurally sound. He soon sees "the building is twisting on its foundations, and windows are popping out." So Whitaker and Reiss start running north, make it a few blocks (but south of Chambers) before collapse and dive when they realize they are about to be overcome by the debris cloud. "Eventually black gives away to gray" and we make our way to Manhattan Community College gym on Chambers, where buckets of water are pored on Whitaker and Reiss, because they are covered head to toe in grey soot. That afternoon Reiss is evacuated to the Port Authority's NJ tech center through the closed Holland Tunnel in the back of a PA police car, because it's not clear how many senior management types survived, and Reiss is deemed that valuable.

What Reiss heard second-hand re events of 9/11

Fire Safety Director in 2 on the intercom told the following, according to different people Reiss has talked to:

"A major incident is occurring in Tower 1, but you are safe here."

"You may evacuate if you desire to."

Reiss says he heard from Mike Hurley (PA Fire Safety Director) that FDNY had considered moving its Tower 1 lobby command post out to the Winter Garden across the Street.

Reiss's recommendations going forward:

- Every building should practice full evacuation dumps
- Need to look at stairwell walls and what quality level they should be
- Every building should put in repeater system for fire department
- Elevators should not have door restrictors (which preclude doors from opening when power out and between floors)
- Continuity of Business plans are huge

Port Authority changes post 9/11 –

Reiss says he didn't really know of any with exception of PA's OEM (which run by John P. Jakowski. OEM is a work in progress – a mini FEMA for PA [We'll review in January] Reiss said he didn't think PA drilling had increased or changed.