

MEMORANDUM FOR THE RECORD

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Event: Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) Boston Center Field Site Interview with Joseph Cooper, Traffic Management Unit Coordinator.

Type of event: Interview

Date: Monday, September 22, 2003

Special Access Issues: None

Prepared by: Geoffrey Brown

Team Number: 8

Location: FAA Boston Air Route Center, Nashua, New Hampshire

Participants - Non-Commission: John R. Donnelly, FAA Senior Attorney [(781) 238 7045]

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

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

Joe Cooper has been with the FAA since 1991 at Area B, and has been with the TMU since 1999. At TMU Cooper generally manages traffic flows and considers TMU to be the "hub" of traffic for Boston Center. The ZBW TMU communicates with ZBW sectors and coordinates what is ongoing in ZBW airspace with the TMUs of other national air centers. Cooper identified TMU positions as departure spacing, en route spacing, arrival flow, military coordinator, and severe weather management. The en route spacing coordinator is responsible for the "metering" of air craft - at about 38 crossing into a new air space per hour. The military coordinator is responsible for clearing airspace for military training purposes. Al Trav is the term used when the military makes an "altitude reservation" - they receive these reservations when they plan on using an air "track" for mid-flight refueling. Reservations for this space can be done through Herndon Command Center. Herndon also handles any national severe weather coordination. Cooper never deals with the ROC or the WOC.

On 9/11, Cooper first heard from Pete Pesquili in Area B that AA11 had lost communication capabilities and radar. The next step was for one of the TMU personnel to contact company. Cooper remembers thinking it odd that an air carrier would loose both at once. TMU pulled the call sign for AA11 to monitor the flight. Controllers were alerted to move air craft away from the possible route of AA11 since the altitude was unknown, and the last registered altitude was FL 290. At that point Area C told TMU that AA11 was a possible hijack. Terry Biggio told Bob Jones to "pull the tapes" (the record of communication between the pilots and the ATC). AA11 veered to the right. The primary target had been tagged, so the data block of the last known information stayed

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with the primary. At first, with only three factors, NORDO, no transponder and serious course deviation Cooper thought AA11 had experienced serious electrical damage. But after the hard left turn and the confirmation of a hijack through the cockpit communication, there was no doubt in Cooper's mind.

Dan Bueno asked Cooper to call for military assistance. Cooper began speaking with Huntress at approximately 123754UTC. He asked Huntress to send F16s out of Otis Air Force Base. Cooper did not know the physical location of Huntress (Rome, New York). Cooper asked Bradley to stop departures headed towards New York when AA11 was roughly five miles south of Albany. When speaking with the military, Cooper believes he spoke with Sergeant Powell. Cooper was unaware of any specific military exercises that were taking place on 9/11. Cooper believes there was a lack of understanding on the military's part on the FAA definition of "primary target", but he was eventually able to give the military a rough latitude and longitude coordinate. Cooper thought they might vector an aircraft from the Falcon Axe area that is composed of airspace 7,000 ft to 49,000 ft. Cooper believes that Collin Scoggins asked the military about height finding capability to be used on AA11.

Cooper stated that Terry Biggio was on a conference call that included New York Traccon and ZNY. He does not believe those calls were recorded, but the hotline on the New York side may have been recorded. They were still attempting to locate AA11 when Terry Biggio told the TMU they lost radar contact with AA11, and shortly after that one of the facilities personnel told the TMU a plane hit the WTC. Cooper went to the TV at the facilities and Cooper immediately knew it was AA11.

Cooper was caught in "disbelief", but he then immediately thought of the strain on his controllers who were attempting to slow down traffic. ZNY then called and informed ZBW of a possible second hijacking and that ZNY airspace was being shut down. Cooper stopped all departures flight planned through ZNY. He then heard of the second hit on the WTC. He immediately realized that control in order to keep the planes still in the sky was all he could do. He told Dan Bueno that maybe they should call ATC Zero. Bueno said to do it, and they sent out the GI message for a ZBW ATC Zero. They reviewed more of the audiotape and Biggio relayed the "we have some planes" through the conference call. The Pentagon then got hit and Herndon called for a National Ground Zero.

Cooper discovered that UAL175 was also a Boeing 767 headed to LAX. The TMU decided to check for planes in the air that were also flight planned from Logan to LAX. They found Delta Flight 1989 and immediately informed Cleveland Center.

NEADS was called and the TMU asked what to do with military aircraft airborne and not responding to the attacks. NEADS announced that all military aircraft not on mission would return to base.

The facility manager then ordered everyone evacuate ZBW except for one supervisor per area, one controller per area, and two TMU personnel.

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Cooper is clear that any suspicion of another airborne threat the DEN line is the absolute first place to report to. It is open at all times. Cooper is not aware of how he would get the military involved except to use the DEN line.

NOTE: Cooper provided Commission staff with a personnel account of the events of 9/11 through his perspective.

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