

COMMISSION SENSITIVE

MEMORANDUM FOR THE RECORD

Event: Rich Belme, Manager of United Airlines SAMC in San Francisco, CA

Type: Interview (conference call)

Prepared by: Lisa Sullivan

Special Access Issues: None

Teams: 7 and 8

Date: November 21, 2003

Participants (non-Commission): John Midgett, Jeff Ellis, Mike Feagley, and Rich Belme

Participants (Commission): Sam Brinkley, John Raidt, Miles Kara, Lisa Sullivan and Bill Johnstone

Location: UAL SOC Chicago, IL

Flight 175

[U] Rich Belme arrived at work on 6:00 a.m. (Pacific Time). He was the shift manager for maintenance control. It is an 8 hour shift. He was getting a briefing from his partner handling the midnight shift, [redacted] when he received word of a Star Fix call from a male flight attendant on UAL 175 received by one of the technicians, Marc Policastro. Belme said that he knew the nature of the call was serious because "he (Policastro) was white as a ghost." This was shortly after 6:00 a.m.

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[U] According to Belme, Policastro said "something like 175 was hijacked, the crew was killed, and they (the hijackers) have taken over the airplane."

Two separate calls

[U] Months prior to that, disgruntled mechanics had prank called the SAMC. Initially, Belme thought this might be another prank call. Belme said that given the way Policastro looked, he immediately told him to make a written statement of what occurred. Then Belme looked up at the TV. At the time, there was commotion in the room because personnel had heard that something had hit the World Trade Center. He thought it must have been a general aviation plane or something like that. He then heard from personnel who were watching the TV that it could have been a commercial jet.

Flight 93

[U] At some point after that, Belme became aware that the Star-Fix people "over there" (apart from the manager's area) had received another strange call from a flight attendant, and were in the process of trying to transfer the call to a manager. Belme immediately

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took the call and talked to a UAL 93 female flight attendant. She was "shockingly calm." He was not sure of the time of the call, but his notes indicated 6:40 a.m.

[U] The FBI later told him the flight attendant was Sandy Bradshaw. He reported that the FBI agent he met with also had a schematic of the airplane and a list of the calls made from the plane. Based on the time he received the call, they were able to figure out where she was located in the plane and where the call was placed.

[U] Bradshaw told him on the phone that two hijackers were in first class at the curtain. They had attacked and killed a flight attendant. She said they did not harm any passengers. She said there were two more hijackers behind the curtain in first class. (His notes indicated she had reported a total of three male hijackers.) There was some dead air during the course of the call. Belme didn't ask about what weapons they used. She was in the back of the plane. Right after speaking to Belme, she called her husband.

(did Bradshaw call her husband?)

[U] She did not describe the hijackers, nor did she mention anything about moving passengers to the back of the plane. She told Belme the hijackers announced they had a bomb on the plane. There was no indication there was a struggle; or that the plane was disrupted when they got into the cockpit.

[U] He found out she called her husband from the FBI and also from the 9-11 related websites he had bookmarked on his personal computer.

(See if we can get these notes)

[U] He took one set of notes he took when he talked to her (contemporaneous). He made another set of notes after-the-fact. He turned one set over to the FBI and he can't find the set he kept. (It was not clear which set was the contemporaneous record.) He sent the United lawyers everything he had by Fed Ex. FBI said his call with the flight attendant from UAL 93 took place at 6:30 a.m. pacific time. He thinks it was at 6:40 a.m.

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[U] After the UAL 175 call ended, he went to talk to the controller that sent the ACARS message to the plane; he informed United management of the situation, and then started the emergency procedures. He thinks 6:40 a.m. is an accurate time of when the call started.

[U] To the best of Belme's knowledge, Policastro, Belme and [redacted] were the only people in the SAMC office to talk to someone on board a hijacked flight.

[U] Belme reported that he tried to get Air phone to establish contact with the planes but these efforts were unsuccessful.

Paul Whitely Call

[U] Later in the day (at 8:16 a.m. Pacific Time), a third strange call was received by [redacted] a United Airlines mechanic working out of London. He reported to have received a "sat 7 call" from a 777 plane. Belme talked to [redacted] about it on 9-11. At that point, the FBI was there with "their army" so they were made aware of the report.

[] reported a call from a distraught captain over what had happened that day. [] couldn't figure out what the call was about but told Belme it sounded like the pilot was being choked. Belme asked him to make a statement and fax it to him. He doesn't know if the report was ever verified.

United Response to Hijackings

[U] After the call from Bradshaw, Belme went to [] who was one of the planners, to get a hold of the FBI. He also went to [] to explain what happened. Then the United crisis center got going. Belme talked to Tony Booth in management (Manager Director of North America). [] sent out pages to the office Vice Presidents. After the UAL 175 call, Belme was very busy.

[U] Belme recalled that [] talked to someone at United Headquarters well before the UAL 93 call. They followed a checklist prepared for the event of a crisis. The Crisis Center was open and operating when UAL 93 was still in the air. This was around 6:40 a.m. pacific time.

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[U] [] talked to Chicago and manned the phone. Belme was working the room and the desk.

[U] Belme reported that Star-Fix calls aren't recorded. Airlink calls are stored for some time to evaluate the service they provide.

(as UFA about the records)

[U] The Sat 7 call received by [] was recorded. It was stored for a short time (for three months or something like that). There was discussion with FBI about recording calls. [] for United would have been a part of the discussion because he knows satcom recording technology.

[U] [] took the 2nd call – the one from UAL 93 - Belme picked up on that line to talk to Bradshaw, the flight attendant.

[U] Belme's contact person at the FBI was []. He was going to try and get descriptions of weapons if another call came in.

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[U] After UAL 93 crashed, management wanted to set up a chartered flight to the site, which is normal procedure. They ran into some problems doing so because the air space was shutting down. Much of his notes were operational/aftermath related.

[U] The only other point Belme wanted to add was that the flight attendant he spoke to was very cool and calm; she was extremely impressive.