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MEMORANDUM FOR THE RECORD

Event: Jeff Griffith, Former FAA Assistant Director of Air Traffic Control

Type: Interview

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Prepared By: Lisa Sullivan

Team: 8

Participants (non-Commission): None

Participants (Commission): Lisa Sullivan, Miles Kara, John Farmer, Dana Hyde, and John Azzarello

Location: GSA Conference Room

Background

Griffith spent 36 years in the FAA. He retired from the FAA in November 2002. Currently, he is consulting on air traffic management in foreign countries including China and Columbia. He enlisted in the U.S. Air Force in 1966 and was trained as air traffic controller. He spent a year in Vietnam. In January of 1970 he was discharged and went to the FAA as controller. He was stationed in Georgia; then in 1976 he went into management; in 1990, he became the manager at Indianapolis Center; he managed Chicago O'Hare for several years; he went to Great Lakes Region; in 1999 or 2000, he was selected as deputy director of air traffic (AT-2) – that was his position on 9-11.

The operations budget was 3.5 billion dollars to operate all the ATC facilities on day to day basis (500 plus). The director of Air Traffic (his boss) was Bill Peacock. Peter Challen was the associate; then Steve Brown; then Monte Belger; then Jane Garvey.

15 people reported directly to Griffith including nine regional division managers and a couple of staff people.

On a day to day basis, he reviewed the previous day's operations. They experienced on average ten break downs and problems in the system. He also received daily briefings from the Command Center on delays and congestion, runway incursions-anything that affected safety.

He had meetings to go to on budget/modernization of the air traffic system - strategy meetings – meetings with the NTSB on closing out certain recommendations – they were

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constantly looking at more efficient use of money, and they were always answering to the Congress on this. There was a lot of IG activity.

Primary radar capabilities

The FAA had issued a paper a decision document to decommission them. However many there were they are very expensive to maintain. Some were 30 to 40 years old ASR 1 and 2 radar systems. The quality wasn't that great.

On top of the radar dish is a secondary radar. It is getting similar information as the primary radar. Secondary radar does not pick up "skin paint;" it takes all the data/electronically transmitted information on the aircrafts. The secondary radar is much cheaper for this reason. The decision was made the primary radar was no longer needed in some environments.

Primary was needed in the terminal environment – a range of 60 miles from the airport - there are about 200 of them. The likelihood of a collision below 20,000 feet was greater that vicinity.

Griffith thought eliminating primary radar outside of the terminal environment would not compromise safety.

The actual decommissioning of ASR 1 and 2 models was to be enacted by turning off the hi-voltage at selected sites. The decommissioning of the models meant that the supply parts and personnel required to maintain the systems could be sent elsewhere. It wasn't a phase out – secondary radar would still be at the sites. The date of decommission had not been set as of September 11.

NTSB had issues with the FAA's plan. "The NTSB was obsessed with notion that an aircraft without transponder would collide with a plane full of people." A plane as a weapon, or a purposeful turning off of the transponder, was not thought of; it was only a mechanical malfunction they were concerned about.

In the last 15 years, Griffith doesn't recall an aircraft losing transponder capability above 15,000 feet. If radar capability is lost, the controller's response is to protect the route from point to point and the altitude. It was very typical to lose radio for a period of time. The loss of transponder was "unusual, but it happened". When it occurred, it was never for an extended period of time.

If an aircraft lost a transponder for the duration of a transcontinental flight, that would be very unusual and it would be reported up to HDQTs. Each facility keeps a log daily that is reported up to Command Center.

Relationship with the Military

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A Joint Military and Civilian Group looked at the uses of the common operating facility and was led by General Eberhardt from the military side and Jim Washington from FAA side (Director of Requirements). There were a lot of people working on that.

The military wanted a 3-D display and a one-second update rate on the newest radar they invested in. Griffith's opinion is that the FAA didn't need that level of definition to separate airplanes. "You don't want to put this in operational environment because of the servicing issues." He wasn't on the team that was discussing these issues with the military (through the Joint Military and Civilian Group).

Lack of Radar Coverage

We had coverage charts we know all the gaps. Mountainous terrain causes loss of primary and secondary radar. In the eastern US there were some gaps, including PA. Griffith thought that gaps in radar coverage were commonly known information, and he felt certain that the controller in the geographic region would have received training at the center on any gaps in coverage that existed.

Regional offices maintain the coverage charts. The idea was to provide the information to the facility in non-technical format. We didn't want them interpreting the information at the centers themselves.

AAL 77

The controller was trained to separate everything in front of that aircraft. The aircraft has always continued to a destination or a planned route of flight. That was the scenario they trained for. If the controller knew a lost target was in the system, the controller would look ahead. Meanwhile, the plane turned around and went the other way.

The AAL 77 controller did not see anything to the front or to the right of the track after the hijacker turned the transponder off. There was no primary radar coverage, so he was unable to see it. Griffith doesn't know that to be true.

Every gap should be memorialized and made clear to the controller. He recalls a general knowledge that some of these planes were not seen on primary radar, but he cannot verify.

Controllers were not trained – there was no training for radar environment with both primary and secondary radars in use.

The controllers are able to track it at both ZBW (Boston Center) and ZNY (New York Center).

The controllers in Indy working AAL 77 had the same equipment as ZBW and ZNY. He knows how the system works.

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It is difficult for Griffith to accept that the controller in Indy Center that handled AAL 77 could not "see" the primary target.

In the Event of Aviation Accidents

When there is a crash in the system, Griffith will learn about it within a few minutes. The notification process is very disciplined. Text pagers were with them at all times. The page was sent to many, including Bill Peacock and him. It was their job to get all the information and begin briefing the Administrator.

Peacock, Challen, Brown and he were a team to work issues together. The data for reconstructing the accident would be sent to the evaluations department. A team was usually put together to go to the site in support of NTSB. It was standard procedure to review the equipment, the tapes, interviews of controllers in order to root out causes and mistakes that might have led to the crash.

Protocol for Hijacking

Hijack-people would convene in the WOC. FBI has the lead so they would be immediately brought on board. Keep airplanes out of the way. Bring it to some sort of resolution.

What about enlisting the military?

Notification capability included DOD. In his group, senior mil officers were at the building and they reported to him. If a plan was in the works that involved the military, it was done at a high level through the people in the WOC.

FAA History – Military background

The FAA was set up to support the military. A series of agreements about different commands set up protocol and put processes and procedures in place for joint use of the air space.

[redacted] was a military liaison stationed at the FAA. She reported to him and Bill Peacock. People that reserved air space for military exercises were at a lower level. It would be brought to her attention only if there was a problem.

Military liaisons for the FAA were also located at Tyndall, Griffiths, NEADs, SEADs West Air Defense Sector, Cheyenne Mtn – they were required to report back to FAA.

WOC (Washington Operations Center) people asked about getting DOD on the line. The person in charge was Eberhardt at Cheyenne Mtn. Belger or the Administrator would have had to call him and give the coordinates and the status of the hijacking in progress. He would order the fighters to launch. It was a high level decision. That is the way it

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should have been done "by the book". Tabletop exercises were practiced annually at an undisclosed location.

FAA supervisors and managers followed rule "7210.3" on hijackings. "7110.65" is the hijack protocol for controllers.

In the event of a hijacking, all the centers call the regional operations center. The region sets up a bridge and tells the Washington Operations Center. They also call the local FBI and local law enforcement and the airport manager. Centers notified the Command Center in Herndon, VA.

On 9-11

He was in the office on the tenth floor. Peacock was away. The first thing he recalls is Dave Canoles on the phone saying "we had an aircraft that hit the World Trade Center." Not long after that, he showed up in the office (he was the manager of evaluation staff). The assumption was it was a small aircraft. They were pulling the tapes, etc. He can't remember a lot of detail after that.

He turned the TV in the office to CNN. He saw that people were saying it was an airliner. He headed down the hall a few minutes later. He went into the ACC room (Aviation Crisis Center).

He was next to Lee Longmire and he had the Command Center on the phone. He started the dialogue: "what do we know what are we doing?"

Lee was setting up the SVTs and pulling the security people together. The White House wanted information.

When he walked in the Crisis Center he was still hearing "crash," not "hijack". It may have been after the second one hit the tower that he went into the room.

Early into this, he was primarily with Belger and Jane Garvey.

He doesn't remember anything about a page or receiving notification in the staff meeting about a transponder being turned off (this was in Shirley Miller's statement). He distinctly remembers being in his office when he first learned about it.

He remembers telling Canoles to set up a situation line before leaving his office for the Aviation Crisis Center: "Get people together collecting data". He knew a lot of people would want to know what happened. He wanted Canoles to get EVERYBODY on the line. In his mind, that was going to be his vehicle for getting information. It ended up, he sent runners down to the ACC to get updates.

When did ZBW call the region to report a second plane?

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He does not know.

Who should have they been calling? Who should the region have talked to at the WOC?

The duty officer on duty that day.

He does not remember when he first heard a plane was hijacked. First, he learned an aircraft hit the trade center. Then, he learned it was a commercial aircraft. Then, the second aircraft hit. At this time, he goes to ACC and talks to John White on the phone at the Command Center. "We were getting ready to get on the SVTs to brief up the chain of command."

Griffith was hearing false reports (that early?). Someone says, "Hey an airplane just hit the Pentagon." [redacted] got on the phone. He was getting reports of people closing down ATC centers. He had to be able to talk to Lee and Lynn Osmus in the corner in the front of the room. It got busy; [redacted] showed up.

People were saying, "Monte we have to shut this thing down," meaning the air space. [redacted] said that Command Center was saying, "Well, we already did that."

SVTs

Griffith was on the SVTS calls. Whenever they wanted to know operational things he was giving information. The Justice Department, FBI, the Administrator were on the SVTs. He doesn't remember when or for how long the White House was on the SVTs. Griffiths was on there quite a bit.

The group up there in the corner (Lee Longmire and Lynn Osmus primarily) was the source of his information that he relayed on the SVTs.

Delta 1989

He was writing all the planes reported suspicious on his pad. He reported on the SVTs about the Delta potential hijacking. That was before we figured out it was not a problem.

AAL 11 as still airborne -

Griffith doesn't remember [redacted] announcing to the aviation crisis center that AAL 11 was still airborne and heading to DC. He doesn't recall the particular piece of information.

The purpose of Canoles setting up the telcon from the ATC Suite was to get information out to the AT Division managers and the 500s (that is the regional level). That was important to him. He ended up with the centers and some of the tracons on there and that was really to get the system back up.

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After the two crashes, he needed to know what was out there, so he had John White from Command Center stay on the phone and told him not to hang up.

He recalled that the White House wanted to know what the situation was at the time. John White told him the call signs, point of arrival and departures, times, etc. He wrote it down and went in to the SVTs it was already video and speaking to them.

He was on there for 5, 10, 7 minutes. Periodically he went in and briefed. It wasn't this continuous thing. It wasn't up the whole time.

Did you hear a conversation about scrambling military aircraft?

Yes. That conversation came up later in the day outside the SVTs.

Do you remember a military aircraft being discussed in the SVTs?

No.

At some point, he reported on the SVTs about grounding the planes.

AAL 77

He didn't think he reported on AAL 77 to the SVTs. We had determined by this time that the trade centers were hit by UAL 175 and AAL 11. The moderator of the SVTS was "squished." DOD was on there - the JCs were on - he didn't recognize them at the time.

[redacted] told Griffith about AAL 77 around 9:30 a.m.. That was the first knowledge he had of it.

Commission staff told Griffith that the real-time count down of AAL 77 plowing in to the Pentagon was reported on Canoles telcon. The call was actually serving as a center for information.

There was a fast-mover 30 miles west of Dulles moving east bound - he did not know it was AAL 77 at the time. Griffith said he got the information on flight 77. He recalls that he had this information and he shared it with the people in the ACC. He doesn't know where the information came from. He recalls that there is a requirement at Washington National Airport to report all unusual aircraft situations to Secret Service. Someone told him we did contact the Secret Service, so he was satisfied. [Miles Kara thought that the report: "Fast mover west of Dulles 30 miles out" may have been reported earlier than 9:30, and could have been in reference to UAL 93. Dan Diggins thought it was UAL 93.]

Then Griffith heard about the C-130 reporting the crash at the Pentagon, so he associated the fast mover with the Pentagon hit.

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There was confusion for hours about which plane hit the Pentagon. He had no report it was AAL 77 that went into the Pentagon. His list of missing planes at that time included AAL 11 and UAL 175 and Delta, Continental...

He was getting air traffic information from [redacted] and Dave Canoles.

UAL 93 and Shoot Down Order

He didn't have much information about it.

Griffiths thought the Secretary of Defense was the one that should have decided to shoot down an airplane. This conversation was taking place in a corner of the ACC. It was a discussion about authority. In his mind, there were fighters in the air and they were responding to the situation and there wasn't anything specific about shooting down UAL 93. Part of that idea of defending themselves was shutting down the system.

Griffith thought it was not his place to give the shoot down order.

Military Liaisons to the FAA

The military liaisons in the building were doing things. He knows that because he saw them. He never directed them to do anything. He told [redacted] the military liaison whatever information he had. He does not recall seeking her out to convey any information. He knew that she was reporting back to her people at the Pentagon.

"Shooting down an airplane requires Rules of Engagement," Griffith said. They didn't exist at that point. His main concern: Civilian controllers did not know how to vector fighters to intercept a plane.

If they are talking about shooting down aircrafts in a civil system, then the fighters were talking to the centers and they were in and they were talking to NORAD as well.

He doesn't remember at what time, but he called General Eberhardt to tell him they were "shutting this thing down." Griffith thought that at the time he placed the call, they didn't have a strong link with the military at this point.

Griffith said that his "focal point" was General Larry Arnold from CONR for 24-hours a day, for a couple of days after that.

UAL 93

He did not notify the military about UAL 93. NEADS knew what was going on at this point. His assumption is that the reps at Griffiths AFB/NEADS (Steve Culbertson) would be talking to Cleveland Center. He thinks this because he knows that Culbertson is up there doing their job. On any other day of the week, if NEADS sees something and they decide to scramble; then it's Culbertson's job to coordinate with FAA.

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Griffith did not do anything to ensure that UAL 93 information was given to anyone. He does not remember who pulled him away to talk about UAL 93 (as noted in an FAA transcript of a recording from that day). He thinks that [redacted] broadcast this report to the room and other people were aware of the hijacking of UAL 93.

John Azzarello Recap:

On AAL 11, the Boston Center reached out directly to military assets. 6-8 minutes before the crash.

On UAL 175, there is not a realization at ZBW that it is hijacked until 10 minutes before the crash. They get notification on it though, too.

On AAL 77, ZDC reports to NEADS that it is lost a few minutes before the crash.

On UAL 93, ZOB told NEADS roughly 4-5 minutes before the crash that UAL 93 was hijacked "bomb on board." But otherwise, ZOB told the Region at 9:39 AM. As early as 9:34 AM, the Command Center had the information about "bomb on board" and so did HDQTs.

Griffith does not disagree with this assessment. The procedures should have allowed for military notification. If you go back to the other three aircrafts and apply the written procedures, then if people hadn't taken their own initiative, similar things would have happened with those aircraft as did with UAL 93.

Are we to assume that HDQTs thought the Center was contacting the military? The Centers didn't have a procedure to contact the military.

He does not recall being on the Air Threat Conference Call that day.

It was an assumption of his that the military was in the loop; he was satisfied that [redacted] was broadcasting information that all the people.

FAA and DOD Communications

The primary net should have included the NMCC. The Air Threat Conference call, conversely, should have had FAA on it.

Were you aware that either of those nets was ineffective on 9-11?

"No, not until later," said Griffith.

The FAA positions at NEADS and SEADS were both vacant before 9-11. Dan Schmeckel at NORAD was retiring. Griffith felt they were important positions to maintain, so went outside his orders to put the guys out there.

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Canoles' line was administrative and the tac net was more operational. [redacted] was trying to be a hero but he closed his air space, which wasn't the thing to do.

Azzarello told Griffith that [redacted] from Boston Center told the Commission that after the first crash, he thought that the appearance of a new code squawking on their radar frequency might possibly be UAL 175. Griffith can't believe that [redacted] [redacted] from Traffic Management could have known that in real time. Griffith was frustrated because the operational element is where the money goes and information should be piped in there. "John White at the Command Center is the guy that should know everything." Dave Canoles wanted to get [redacted] on the telcon. [redacted] should have not relayed operational information on an administrative line.

"What can people in conference rooms with speaker phones do about stopping aircrafts? Nothing!"

There should a CARF or a military liaison to the center at every center. Due to staffing cuts, the position was eliminated. [redacted] performed the role of military liaison at ZBW and he did a good job that day. Usually, controllers at the centers have the MOS responsibilities as an additional duty within the TMU.

He does not remember seeing John Flaherty that day (Secretary Mineta's Chief of Staff). He did not interact with him.

He does not know if the Administrator or the Deputy Administrator was made aware of UAL 93 before it crashed.

Jane Garvey and Monte Belger looked to both him and the security people for information that day.

His focus was the operational element so it was frustrating to him to find out other information was shared through other avenues.

Post 9-11 After-Action

"It was like pulling teeth" to get information after 9-11. The Centers weren't cooperative. Tony Ferrente worked night and day for weeks to pull the information together. Finally, they got it together to the point they could brief the FBI and the Secret Service. Dick Clark was present at the meeting, as were DOD people.

He went to a briefing at the White House about a week later associated with protecting the national capital region. Primarily, it was a Secret Service briefing. FAA had a part. Mike Canavan briefed on security issues, and Griffith briefed on ATC issues. They were concerned about a plane taking off from Washington National on runway 3-6 and hitting the White House. They briefed on the exercise missile sights ready to shoot down airplanes around DC.

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Dave Canoles briefed Griffith on the "9-11 Hijackings Summary of Events". He got tons of briefings - different iterations of it. There were also internal meetings at the FAA on what the FAA knew and when; and what did they do with the information.

Coordination with the military?

"Larry Arnold (CONR) made sure we got whatever we needed," Griffith said. He gave Arnold whatever they wanted.

Griffith remembers that General Arnold, also an Alaskan General, and General Eberhardt received shoot down authority. ROEs were communicated to the FAA as well.

[redacted] was tasked to come up with a review of coordination between the FAA and the military.

He is not aware of the White House asking to be briefed on military and FAA communications from 9-11.

General Wayne Downing had meetings by SVTs with the FAA and the White House. Contents of discussion on the SVTs:

- a lot of intelligence issues
- any issues regarding the AT system

Agencies that participated in the SVTs sessions included: Secret Service, JCS, FBI, and CIA. Dick Clark was not on all the meetings (he delegated the staff). Any meetings between FAA and Dick Clark were attended by General Mike Canavan prior to 9-11.

Homeland Security's color coded system - FAA put together a scheme of what actions were required at each level.

Dave Canoles and Tony Ferrente were the principle people involved in the After Action review. They briefed the Deputy and the Administrator by on his summary of 9-11 events.

John Azzarello spent some time comparing the information in the briefing materials "summary on 9-11" that differs from one of the original NEADS logs with Griffiths.

Azzarello pointed out the unlikelihood that one of the NEADS logs lists the tail number of the first hijacked planes. Griffith affirmed that having a plane by tail number is odd, so soon after the event.

Griffith doesn't know what happened to [redacted]s after-action work. She put the report together. It was a topic of hot debate among FAA employees. He knew people were saying that FAA and military notification times were inconsistent. "Everyone was pointing fingers." Larry and he approached it pragmatically. Getting the people and getting the logs was the first step; then [redacted] was asked to go find out on the FAA side.

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The NEADS logs were given to FAA. [REDACTED] screened the logs provided by NEADS.

Azzarello pointed out to Griffiths that notification times for the other flights are listed as unknown, according to the log. Griffiths assured staff that the military got the information; he said he is confident about that.

Larry and he had a lot of heated conversations. "Larry and I agreed we wanted the truth on the issue." [REDACTED] from CONR also coordinated with FAA.

The DOD testimony to Congress was wrong. Griffith confirmed this. He and Larry Arnold did not talk in great detail about the times. They talked about the bosses fighting over head. The DEN addressed these concerns.

Griffith didn't have any information on the FAA press release that addressed the issue of notifications to the military on 9-11. They probably asked him about it. It is a timeline of FAA events on 9-11.