

MEMORANDUM FOR THE RECORD

Event: Phone call with Janet Riffe, FAA's Principal Security Inspector assigned to American Airlines on 9/11

Type of Event: Conference Call / Briefing

Date: September 11, 2003

Special Access Issues: None

Prepared by: John Raidt

Team Number: 7

Location: Conference Call

Participants -- Non Commission: Janet Riffe, FAA Principal Security Inspector assigned to American Airlines on 9/11, and Brandon Strauss, Counsel at TSA (monitoring).

Participants -- Commission: John Raidt and Lisa Sullivan

The purpose of the conference call was to trace the origin of the report that a gun was on board American Airlines flight 11. Specifically, to determine if Riffe had been told by an employee at American Airlines Corporate Headquarters that a gun was on board American Airlines flight 11; as reported in an FAA internal memorandum.

Janet Riffe was the FAA's Principal Security Inspector (PSI) assigned to American Airlines on 9/11/01. She had been in that position for about a year to a year and a half. Riffe is currently employed by the TSA as an Assistant Federal Security Director for Operations at Greensboro, North Carolina.

Riffe is the PSI mentioned in an FAA internal memorandum that contained the following text:

"The American Airlines FAA Principal Security Inspector (PSI) was notified by Suzanne Clark of American Airlines Corporate Headquarter that an on-board flight attendant contacted American Airline Operations Center and informed that a passenger located in seat 10B shot and killed a passenger in seat 9B at 9:20 a.m. The passenger killed was Dan Lewin, shot by passenger Satam Al Suqami. One bullet was reported to have been fired."

John Raidt read the passage to Riffe and asked her if the passage accurately depicted what Suzanne Clark had told Riffe about a shooting. Riffe said the memo was a correct depiction of what she'd been told.

Riffe said she was in the FAA HQ Command Center taking notes on her calls as more information came in. She said she that Suzanne was not her normal point of contact at

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Corporate Headquarters. Following the initial call from her in which she described the shooting; Riffe did not speak to her again. The notes from the call with Clark were given to her manager that day, Fran Lozito (#2 in the FAA command center). Lozito gave them to Lee Longmire (#1 in the command center). The information was put into a log. The executive summary was produced from the log. Riffe's view was that the executive summary was being prepared for the Administrator.

According to Riffe, the next day someone in the Administrator's office said that her note was the only gun reference found and to please clarify for accuracy.

Lee Longmire asked Riffe to contact American Airlines to confirm her report of the gun. She talked to her normal point-of-contact, Chris Bidwell, the manager of corporate security at American Airlines. Riffe said Bidwell told her the report was erroneous. Riffe verbally passed the update to Lee Longmire.

Riffe didn't know anything about follow-on drafts of the executive summary that may have deleted the passage.

Riffe indicated that the GAO did a comprehensive investigation into the gun issue.

Riffe expressed her view that Suzanne Clark, if asked, would deny telling Riffe anything about a shooting; although Riffe is sure she did.

Riffe added that there was a lot going on in the command center and in the aviation system. There was a lot of erroneous information floating around.

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MEMORANDUM FOR THE RECORD

Event: Janet Riffe, FAA Principal Security Inspector for American Airlines

Type of Event: Interview

Date: February 26, 2004

Special Access Issues: None

Prepared by: John Raidt

Location: GSA

Team: 7

Participants (non-Commission): Janet Riffe and Christine Beyer (TSA General Counsel's office)

Participants (Commission): Sam Brinkley and John Raidt

Background

[U] In September 1990, Riffe was hired as a special agent and Federal Air Marshal by the FAA in the Dallas Ft. Worth CASFO. In October of 1992, Riffe transferred to the Dulles CASFU in the same position. In June 1995 Riffe was transferred to FAA Headquarters to serve as the Principal Security Inspector (PSI) for U.S. Airways. In September 1996 Riffe was moved to Oklahoma City to serve as a manager in the training division. In 1998 Riffe became the PSI for Continental and TWA. In May 2000 she became the PSI for American Airlines, and served in this position on September 11, 2001. In December 2002 Riffe was appointed as the Assistant Federal Security Director for Operations at the airport in Greensboro, North Carolina.

American Airlines

[U] Riffe said that as PSI she spoke to someone in AAL's corporate security office every day, sometimes as many as three times a day on issues regarding implementation of and compliance with FAA security rules.

[U] Riffe stated that American Airlines, like other carriers, tended to question FAA security rules and wanted to know what specific threats justified the particular measure that FAA was requiring. She said they would question, but would ultimately comply as required. Riffe said the biggest problem she had as PSI was with AAL's pilot group who continually fought the requirement to conduct security training. For instance, the pilots had seen the Common Strategy taped many times, and they didn't want to have to watch it any more.

Special Emphasis Assessments

[U] Riffe said that the FAA's SEA results were given to the PSI's and that she in turn would forward them to the carrier, often with a letter expressing concern about the results. Riffe said she didn't have much latitude to tell them what to do in order to fix the deficiency. She said that the PSI didn't have enforcement teeth and couldn't threaten to take away flights etc. She didn't find the approach to be particularly effective.

[U] Riffe said she would get the results of the SEA's and of Red Team reports broken down by airline. She said that the FAA didn't prepare a yearly report providing all the results of the testing involving the airline. She said that the air carriers were well aware of how poorly they performed in these SEA's.

[U] Overall, Riffe said that when it came to security American was a 5 on a 1-10 scale. She cited US Airways as an example of a top performing company on security who she would score as an 8.

Fines

[U] Riffe said that American was definitely concerned about fines. When she was assigned to be the PSI for American, the carrier was involved in a global settlement of its many fines. As part of the settlement, FAA wanted to put out a press release to announce the agreement, but American was adamantly opposed to doing so because the company feared the bad publicity.

[U] Riffe stated that FAA General Counsel's office would negotiate the fines in order to avoid having to go to court with the airlines.

Detection vs. deterrence

[U] Riffe was asked about American Airlines' view that the role of checkpoints was to "deter" m, while deemphasizing the requirement to "detect" at checkpoints. She responded by saying that the airline had to know it was their responsibility to detect because federal law required that the carrier not allow dangerous weapons in the sterile area or onboard their aircraft.

Measuring performance of the air carrier

[U] Riffe agreed that the way to measure an air carrier's performance in security was to look at the following areas: corporate structure; security spending; manpower; SEA results; FAA testing/checkpoint assessments; and EIS (enforcement) cases that were opened against them.

[U] Riffe said that she didn't receive the self-assessments that the carriers were required to conduct on their checkpoint operations.

American's security programs

[U] Riffe stated that American did have an exceptional International Security Program but that its domestic program was lacking. The carrier's creation of its Domestic Security Program was the result of its being put on probation by EPA and FAA Hazmat for improperly storing hazardous materials. This problem is why the carrier created the position of Vice President for Safety, Security and Environmental (Tim Ahern).

[U] Riffe believed the reason that their domestic security program lagged was because the carrier was influenced by the absence of domestic incidents. She said that American didn't believe the threat was domestic, and that it all came down to money. She said that they didn't want to spend money when no security incidents had occurred. Riffe thought it would be interesting to see the breakdown of how AAL security personnel were assigned to domestic security as opposed to international security. She cited Jack Bullard as someone who fought FAA security requirements while Larry Wansley was good and took security seriously.

Intelligence

[U] She said that American would sometimes ask her about intelligence and threat information. However, she did not get daily intelligence information. She said that once every few months she would receive a presentation or get some particular piece of information that wasn't in IC's or SD's. Even though she had a security clearance she did not receive the Daily Intelligence Summary (DIS)

[U] Riffe stated that she knew of UBL, al Qaeda and its interest in aviation prior to 9/11 but considered the threat they posed as an overseas threat. She said that her awareness of the threat was not detailed. She wanted more data, but felt like ACI wasn't forthcoming with information and further noted that she felt that PSI's were inconveniencing ACI if they would venture into the SCIF.

CAPPS and Manual Prescreening

[U] Riffe said that when FAA went to computerized passenger pre-screening. Some of the smaller airlines and airports continued to use Manual Prescreening. She stated that while the consequences of selection by CAPPS was solely explosives screening of checked baggage, selectees of the manual system continued to be subjected to a secondary hand search of carry-on baggage. She said the PSI's wondered why the FAA wanted two different standards for the consequences of selection. Riffe felt that CAPPS was intended to get rid of the human element in prescreening to make it more consistent. She believes that diminishing the consequences of selection for those carrier that went to computer assisted prescreening was a decrease in security.

Continuous Search

[U] Riffe agreed that the ACSSP and Alert Level III required carriers to randomly conduct hand searches of carry-on bags on a continuous basis and that this meant a hand search was supposed to be going on at all times except for when the screener was transporting the bag from the x-ray machine to the table for the hand search. Riffe said that the random/continuous hand search was not practiced the way it should have been. In fact she said when FAA tested this requirement, they found that the carriers/contractors did it only about 50% of the time. She recounted an incident in which she observed American checkpoints at DFW failing to conduct the random/continuous hand searches and called American's corporate office to complain. She also notified the CASFO.

GSC monitoring

[U] Riffe also stated that the ACSSP required the Ground Security Coordinator (GSC) to frequently monitor checkpoint performance, but that this was not properly practiced. After 9-11 a Security Directive was issued requiring air carrier supervisory staff to monitor checkpoint operations at all times.

Cockpit keys

[SSI] Riffe was aware that American had one key that fit all cockpits and jet-bridges. She thought that this was a questionable practice, but there was no regulation prohibiting it, and any attempt to regulate it wouldn't meet the cost/benefit requirements of federal regulatory law.

FAMs

[U] Riffe stated that FAMs cost a lot of money and that given the absence of domestic attacks they could not be justified on a cost/benefit basis to OMB.

9-11 The Day

[U] On the morning of 9-11 Riffe was at work when sometime between 8:30 a.m. and 9:00 a.m. Bob McLaughlin came down and said that there was a hijack in progress on an American flight and that she needed to come to the WOC (Wash. Operations Center). She's not sure if Bob McLaughlin was the first at the FAA HQ to know about the problems that day but indicated that he might know who was.

[U] She went upstairs to the WOC and called AAL and talked to Joe Bertapelle and Suzanne Clark of AAL. She's not completely sure which call came first but she thinks it was Bertapelle. Bertapelle told her that at 8:39 they had received a report that two flight attendants had been stabbed, the plane was descending, and there was information that the flight was flying erratic. At some point Bertapelle told her that CNN was reporting that Flight 11 was a 767-200 with 81 passengers.

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[U] At some point, Suzanne Clark told her that a hijacker (Saqami) shot and killed a passenger (Lewin). She provided the seat numbers and passenger names, and said that the aircraft was headed back to Kennedy Airport. She thinks she was told this information 15 to 20 minutes before the plane crashed into the WTC. Riffe stated that they had no reason to believe it wasn't going back to Kennedy. She put this and other information received throughout the day on small pieces of paper that were given to Lee Longmire who was running the WOC and also to the "events recorder."

[U] Though she can't be sure of times or sequence she remembers talking to Larry Wansley, Dave Divan and Tim Ahern at various points throughout the day.

[U] She's not sure exactly when but at some point they received word that a UAL plane was being hijacked, and then she heard that a plane had crashed into the Pentagon. She said that the report of the Pentagon crash was the first they had heard of a problem on Flight 77.

[U] Riffe said that her notes indicated that a report was received that flight 93 had crashed in to Camp David. (NOTE: Riffe will send us a copy of her notes from the WOC that day).

[U] She stated that they received a lot of information in the WOC on 9/11 including the an aircraft crashed into the Lincoln Memorial.

[U] She said that within an hour of the crashes AAL faxed the five names of the hijackers on both flight 77 and flight 11.

Flight 77

[U] Riffe's notes indicate that at 10:05 she talked to Tim Ahern who confirmed that AAL #11 and AAL#77 both crashed into the ATC. She said that American kept saying that 77 had gone into the WTC. There were several hours of confusion before they received confirmation that 77 was the flight that crashed into the Pentagon.

ATC

[U] Riffe said that the primary net was on a speaker inside the WOC. She does not believe that the ATC Command Center was on either the Primary or Tactical Net. She believes that someone in the WOC was on the phone with ATC on a separate line.

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Recording events in the WOC

[U] She doesn't remember if the information was posted on an overhead projector but all the data points received in the WOC were entered into a computer by an "events recorder." She named [redacted] as people who had performed that role. They took turns logging information in the computer. She said that Longmire ran the WOC most of the time but that [redacted] and Willie Gripper ran it as well later in the day.

Cargo

[U] Riffe said that she pulled the cargo manifests for both American flights. AAL #11 had two ULD's of cargo, and one package of hazardous material: dry ice. AAL #77 had only mail and baggage. (NOTE: We want the cargo manifests).

Notifying Cockpits/reverse screening

[U] She does not recall any discussion of the need to contact pilots to secure their cockpits, nor does she recall any discussion of screening planes/passengers once they were grounded.

Other Plots

[U] Riffe said she remembers hearing on 9-11 that some passengers were supposed to be on a TWA flight in St. Louis, bolted and were apprehended. She believes that the CASFO in St. Louis or DFW made the report.

Checkpoints

[U] Riffe described the testing that FAA used to conduct on checkpoint operations. Checkpoints were tested twice a month to see how well they were detecting test objects. The checkpoint received one comprehensive assessment per year (looking at training, equipment etc.) and three supplemental tests per year.

TSA Today

[U] TSA is no longer testing checkpoint operations because the agency is afraid to know how we're doing. TSA regulatory resources have decreased since TSA took over. There are no regulatory assessments of cargo, access control etc. There is only a small group of people in internal affairs conducting tests. Given the many airports in the U.S. There's no way they can do the job sufficiently. They are coming nowhere near the level of testing that was conducted by the CASFO's under the old system. She said that she couldn't tell how checkpoints are doing at Greensboro because they don't test. She was told by TSA headquarters that the FSD's may not conduct testing.

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[U] Riffe also stated that there's a lot of confusion about roles and missions at TSA. Operations doesn't talk to policy. There are too many layers of management. We don't know who we are supposed to go to for answers. She believes that TSA is still caving in to special interests. The regulated industry is still telling us what we can and can't do.

9/11 Closed by Statute

[U] TSA has hired a lot of former air carrier people with a mindset of customer service rather than security.

Recommendations

[U] People who might be thrust into a position in an emergency operations center need some training. "We didn't know who was responsible for what."

[U] Test the system.