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MEMORANDUM FOR THE RECORD

MR 04021493

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Event: Theresa Adams, Area 7 Air Traffic Controller

Type of event: Interview

Date: Thursday, September 25, 2003

Special Access Issues: none

Prepared by: Cate Taylor

Team Number: 8

Location: Indianapolis Air Traffic Control Center

Participants - Non-Commission: Theresa Adams, Area 7 Air Traffic Controller; Eileen

Participants - Commission: John Farmer, Dana Hyde, Cate Taylor

Background

Adams began with the FAA in 1989 and has been an air traffic controller at Indi for the past ten years. She had never before been involved in a hijack situation. Her understanding of hijack procedures pre 9/11 was to notify the area supervisor, confirm hijack with the pilot, and comply with requests.

Adams has to deal with a NORDO situation a few times per week. In this situation, Adams calls the airline company to reestablish communication with the aircraft. She has had to deal with the loss of transponder communication about every few months. In this situation, she asks the pilot to restart the transponder.

Experience on 9/11

Adams was training someone on the d-side of a position in area 7 on 9/11. The radar controller in the position she was working at had already noticed that AA77 had disappeared when she looked up at the screen and saw AA77 in coast mode. The transponder was not functioning at this point. Adams called the sector in front of AA77's path to clear the predicted path. The radar controller at Adams' position in Area 7 was getting ready to take the hand off of AA77 from the Henderson sector in area 3.

Adams received a call from the Henderson sector controller who said that AA was looking for a plane. She also learned that AA11 had crashed into the WTC but she didn't know why this was important at the time.

Adams was not told to look for primary targets and did not do so. She still expected that AA77 was flying without a transponder. Henderson called to report that AA77 was NORDO and Adams thought a crash was possible but not probable.

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Next, Dave Critter, the Area 7 supervisor, came into the area and gave the order to ground all flights. Adams did not understand the correlation until after all planes were down. During the grounding, Adams was telling the pilots that there was a "national emergency" and they were to "get everybody on the ground now." It took about 30 minutes to ground all aircraft in Area 7. After all flights were grounded, Adams went on break.

Adams did hear rumors about a Cleveland controller saying there was a crash but doesn't remember anything about Ashland, KY.

Post 9/11

When faced with a NORDO situation now, procedure is to notify the supervisor, call the airline company, and call out to the aircraft several times. Pilot's awareness and responsiveness is not a problem.

Adams did not have any recommendations for the Commission staff.