

MEMORANDUM FOR THE RECORD

(2)

Event: Mark Evans, Supervisor of the Traffic Management Coordinators

Type of event: Interview

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Special Access Issues: None

Prepared by: Lisa Sullivan

Team Number: 8

Location: Cleveland Air Traffic Control Center

Participants - Non-Commission: Mark Evans, former Air Traffic Controller, CLE Center and Michael McKinley, FAA attorney

Participants - Commission: John Farmer, Dana Hyde, and Lisa Sullivan

Evans has been a controller for 22 years at Cleveland Center. Throughout that time, he was a controller, a traffic man coordinator, and a supervisor. He has been the traffic management supervisor (STMC) for the last three years, and was in that role on 9-11. Technically, he is the Air Space and Procedural Manager.

Prior to 9-11, as a supervisor in a hijack situation he would have 1) isolated the aircraft on a separate frequency, 2) divert the plane away from the other aircraft, 3) the controller would try to get the pilot to squawk the appropriate code, and 4) notification the manager on duty.

He did not think anyone at the Center was responsible for notifying the military. "Nothing in the requirements that he knows of to put military on alert right away," he said. Commission staff asked if guidance would be given to the person in mil operations position to call the military in the event of hijacking? Evans said that "Analytical thinking is not what controllers are supposed to do. Even today, they wouldn't make that decision."

Today, a controller's responsibilities are primarily the same. There are more explicit directions about notification to Washington Command Center. "Today, there is the live NORAD phone. First thing they would do is call it. Everyone knows immediately and the decision to scramble does not, and has never sat with us."

Even if he wanted to notify the military on that day, he would not have known who to call. He reiterated that he would notify the Command Center, and focus on isolating the plane.

On 9/11, he came in for his yearly physical and heard that a plane had hit the WTC. He was vaguely aware of what was going on. When he entered the TMU, he assisted the

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position of STMC because he was not supposed to be in that day. People were already in dialogue with the Command Center. They were already profiling planes into Cleveland airspace. Later on, there were planes unaccounted for. He did a lot of work trying to account for them. There was a Delta that was potentially part of the plot. There was some work involved in getting it to land. UA 93 frequency was patched into the TMU area.

Once UA 93 ceased communications they found the primary target. He said that he called the Command Center to inform them of the Delta flight that fit the profile. He decided to leave that line open and talked to them back and forth. This call was recorded and he thought it would be on the master reel. The call lasted for three - four hours. He provided them with updates as they tracked the primary. At one point, they were in contact with controllers in Pittsburg because UA 93 was heading their way. It looked like the plane was heading towards DC.

He reported to have "Inquired numerous times if fighters were on the way." The response he received is, "Higher authorities looking into it." Evans commented, "that didn't give me a warm fuzzy at the time."

If UA 93 transmissions were on 9:32 and 9:39a.m., he did not hear them directly. Within a minute of losing the transponder, he called Command Center almost instantaneously. Was this the first they heard of UA 93? Certainly seemed there level of interest increased dramatically at that time. Initial call was to one person. Could of put the person on speaker then. He made the call from the east area of the TMU, possibly from the severe weather line.

Prior to UA 93, he was doing the TMU function. Certain planes fit the profile - he had taken the call about looking into the Delta flight. It was confusing at the time. Until then he was playing the standard traffic management line. He knew that Gary and Rick were on and off a couple of times the national telcon. He said he compared notes with them when he could.

In terms of declaring the flight a hijack, he said that he was technically outside the official line of command: Controller - Supervisor - Manager.

As far as he knew, NORDO is not the only requirement for notification. The garbled transmissions were not enough to go on; he doesn't think they could make a positive identification of which flight was having the problem.

Military operations position sits underneath us. Greg Dukeman and Tom Kerinko would know what bases have what types of things. That morning, the military wasn't really that involved. "A couple of times, we asked them to get on the phone with someone...." Evans said, "Possibly, they were discussing amongst themselves who to call for military assets." As far as he knew, nothing came out of their discussions.

Since the primary target was firmly established at Cleveland Center and was heading eastbound, Evans queried several times whether or not military assets had been

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scrambled. "It was clear that it was going to DC. I told CC that it was. They could not have seen it on their TSD. CC was blind," Evans said. Tape ID 45 should have a record of this conversation between Evans and the Command Center.

Toledo and Selfridge: Evans said they talked about those bases, but he didn't remember the specific information. He remembers this was a "sidebar" conversation. He doesn't know if they were ever scrambled in response to the hijackings.

His open phone line was the sole means to communicate decisions at a higher level. He communicated the order to ground all planes to Craig and Kim, etc, and they implemented it through the controllers. He remembered that there was a short, interim decision to land a certain class of aircraft that was amended to land all planes.

Did you communicate to Command Center that 93 had crashed? Yes. His understanding was that their report was the first the Command Center had heard of it. The Command Center had real time info from him about what was going in. Instantaneous.

When CC instructed you to land all the planes, did they instruct you to tell the pilots anything? "No, nothing explicit. Something about a national emergency," Evans replied.

Evans also remembered there were numerous queries about UA 77, as well as other planes that were not accounted for in the system. He thought there were 15-20 aircraft listed.

"SPRT" messages enabled Cleveland Center to determine quickly that UA 77 did not make it as far as Cleveland Center. Pull the flight plan and see that it wasn't supposed to fly through. They told Command Center to query Indianapolis Center on UA 77.

All of the primary returns were up on the controllers' screens. Clutter was less of an issue because they were clearing the skies. In looking for UA 77, they were looking for a fast moving target.

After UA 93 went down, the skies were being cleared.

He was on for 4 or 5 hours the rest of the day with CC. He was talking to them about other things such as the remaining aircraft that were unaccounted for, and noncompliant pilots. He followed up on the case of the Delta flight that was forced to land at Cleveland Airport. In another instance, he was asked to relay "the lat and longs" (exact location) of where UA 93 crashed.

Flights 11 and 175: Evans said, "There was confusion about what had and had not hit the WTC." He was asked by the Command Center to look for those flights early on.

He said he took extensive notes that day. He turned them over to Mr. Kettel who was preparing a report to send to the Region. Kettel probably threw them out when he was done with them.

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In retrospect, Evans thought Cleveland Center's advantage was the advance knowledge of what events had preceded UA 93 that enabled them to track the plane's primary target so successfully.

He thought that it was certainly not clear whose authority it was to call fighters. CC didn't think they had the authority. No one knew who had the authority to get military action started.