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MEMORANDUM FOR THE RECORD

Event: Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) Boston Center Field Site Interview with William Dean, Traffic Management Unit Specialist

Type of event: Interview

Date: Monday, September 22, 2003

Special Access Issues: None

Prepared by: Geoffrey Brown

Team Number: 8

Location: FAA Boston Air Route Center, Nashua, New Hampshire

Participants - Non-Commission: John R. Donnelly, FAA Senior Attorney [(781) 238 7045]

Participants - Commission: John Azzarello, Miles Kara, Geoffrey Brown

NOTE: Please refer to the recorded interview for a complete account.

Dean has been a Traffic Management Unit (TMU) specialist for the past four years, has worked at Boston Approach Tracon and at Logan Tower prior to that. He has also worked with the FAA in Albuquerque, and in ZBW as an Area E controller.

As a TMU specialist Dean is responsible for smoothing the flow of traffic to busy airports. He gets heavily involved in cooperating with other centers on the air traffic flows.

On 9/11 Dean started in TMU, but then went to Area E Sector 20 to perform his 8 hours per month of mandatory radar duty. He was operating as John Hartling's RA. This was at about 8 o'clock am, and the Kingston Sector (20) is relatively busy at that time. Athens Sector D38 called with a report of unusual situation involving a flight with no transponder and NORDO. Dean stated that NORDO wasn't very unusual prior to 9/11, but that no transponder signal was. Shirley Kula informed Dean that the last known altitude for AA11 was FL 290, but Dean does not recall if the flight was off course yet at this point. He assumed though that since Kingston was informed the flight was of course.

Dean's stated that lost transponders, though rare, can be mainly associated with older military aircraft. He believes he has seen it happen with commercial airlines five or six times in the course of his career. He has never seen an aircraft with no transponder, NORDO and with a serious deviation from course.

Pre 9/11 Dean noted the standard procedure for NORDO was to operate off of common

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sense by checking the frequency of the plane's previous sector, then attempting to contact the plane through company or through AirInc. Dean stated that approximately 80% of airspace users subscribe to AirInc.

Regarding transponder loss, Dean noted the ATC will request the crew recycle the transponder. Dean stated that a primary target is difficult to track, and that for a primary target to enter another center's airspace it must have permission. When AA11 went into ZNY airspace, ZNY wanted to know who had given it permission. When tagging a primary, Dean explained that the ATC must manually select the primary target, and associate a data block with that target.

Regarding hijack procedures pre-9/11 Dean noted that the ATC is trained to respond to signals from the cockpit - either direct verbal confirmation, the confirmation of squawking the 7500 transponder code, or the use of code words - by relaying the information to the supervisor.

After the situation with AA11 began to escalate in ZBW airspace, Dean unplugged from the RA position and reported to the TMU. At the TMU watch desk Dean remembers making several calls. He called NEADS to find assistance, and thought there might have been defense strike fighters in Rome, New York at NEADS. Dean stated that the information conduit to the military was "muddled", and that he would have expected a better procedure for the FAA to receive quick military assistance. He had never been involved in a situation in his experience in which the FAA called for military fighters, but had been involved in situations in which the military requests FAA ATCs to assist in locating targets.

There was a DSN (?) number for NEADS, and there were the hard lines. Dean estimated that ZBW could contact needs in less than 15 seconds, but noted that getting in touch with NEADS and communicating the urgency of the situation, then getting an actual response are two very different timetables.

Dean noted that since 9/11 procedural details on receiving military aid are extensive, but may also be confusing in a real-time emergency.

The policy for a "traditional" hijacking, according to Dean, is detailed in the 7610.4 FAA manual section on Special Operations and Procedures. This section also covers the procedure for military aircraft shadowing planes, but Dean had no knowledge of a local document on how to handle hijacks. He noted that there is proficiency training on a yearly basis for ATCs, but that even though the exercises covered a good level of situations, the real time encountering of them can be difficult for a controller to handle.

Dean views the current approach to air traffic security as "a bit of an overkill", but believes it is positive that the FAA is taking security serious. He noted that one of the procedures now is that a supervisor can advise an ATC to tell a pilot to do a 360 degree turn to verify that everything on board is fine. He noted that this can be difficult when there is a good amount of traffic, and that functional control by the ATC of airspace is

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critical to performing these verifications.

Dean noted that after 9/11 Patricia Garbone (?) at the Northeastern ROC conducted an informal review. Commission staff inquired at the ROC after any documents produced from this review. An answer is pending.

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