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MEMORANDUM FOR THE RECORD

Event: Tom Kerinko, Military Operations Specialist

Type of event: Type: Interview

Date: October 2, 2003

Special Access Issues: None

Prepared by: Lisa Sullivan

Team: 8

Location: Cleveland Air Traffic Control Center

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

Participants (non-Commission): Tom Kerinko and Michael McKinley, FAA attorney,
Great Lakes Region

Kerinko [redacted] was never asked to make a statement about his involvement in the events on 9-11. Investigation package of accident deals with people operationally involved, which Kerinko made very clear, was not his role that day.

At the time of 9-11, he was working in an office upstairs. He handled plans, contingencies, letters of agreement, etc. As the military operations specialist, it was his job to deal with military organizations that came into contact with the Center. In 1967, he began with FAA as a trainee at the Cleveland facility. He was a full performance controller for approximately eight years. [redacted] In 1981 when the controllers striked, he was asked to come back to assist in the military division. Eventually, he converted back as full-time military operations specialist.

At the Cleveland facility [redacted]
[redacted] He verified that Greg Dukeman worked military operations for FAA on 9-11.

HE develops procedures that are used operationally. He negotiated with his military contacts on training areas (special use airspace) that they wanted to use for routine activities.

Prior to 9-11, he worked with Bill Ayers, his NORAD counterpart. They would communicate regarding changes in the air space (size and shape), on topics such as restricted air space, and also any problems that may arise with military air craft in Cleveland Center. On average, he would talk to Bill every week if issues were pending. They were only in touch when there was a topic at hand or a problem.

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It was his understanding that in the event of a hijacking, NORAD would request vectors to the aircraft and they would put a fighter in position behind the airplane to follow it in. He never experienced this situation. Kerinko did not remember any changes to hijacking policy with regard to the FAA or the military during his time at Cleveland Center.

Kerinko was involved with the development of Standard Operating Procedures for the persons handling selected positions including weather and military operations. They would refer to procedures he helped create if they had questions. He would go down to the control room to help work out problems with procedures in SOPs.

If fighters were going to go out and train in a certain air space, he wouldn't be involved.

Kerinko told the Commission staff that NORAD assigned an Air Defense Liaison Officer to FAA regional facilities to help work out problems. Cleveland Center is a part of the Great Lakes Region. There is an officer from each of the armed services. The position existed before 9-11 and nothing has changed.

On 9-11, he was at his doctor's office when saw that planes hit on TV. He left the waiting room and went immediately to the center. Everyone was acting very professional because controllers were covering each position. HE assisted the military operations person, Dukeman, by passing him information that could be passed to NORAD. He was very busy that day.

Kerinko thought SCATANA might be enacted, so he and Dukeman "started to prepare the packages in case it was declared. It never was," said Kerinko. The Supervisor on Duty that day asked him to call to request an aircraft to intercept UA 93. He may or may not have called NEADS. He called the weapons section - operational. They scrambled and brought someone up, according to Kerinko.

Since 9-11, he tried to review the tapes from that day to refresh his memory about whom he talked to and the sequence of events. He relayed what he thought was pertinent from the floor or from the TMU to Dukeman. If he was too busy to receive information, he may have called on the military DSN phone (all the lines were extremely busy). He doesn't remember if he was able to get through or not.

If the military tried to get through the Cleveland Center, military personnel would have had the Watch Supervisor's number. If that line was busy, they would have tried the military operations desk.

Kim Wernika was one of the supervisors that day. So was Craig Pass. He is not sure who else.

When asked what information was passed to the military from the Center directly, Kerinko thought the Center had told NEADS about the message about a bomb on board

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flight UA 93 heard over the frequency. NEADS wanted to know how the Center knew that, and they told them it had been broadcast over the frequency.

Kerinko thought the excerpt from the NEADS transcript with Cleveland Center was most likely Dukeman's voice. He had listened to the tape the day before in preparation for the interview.

On the section of the transcript referring to Delta 1989, Kerinko could not provide any more information. He does not remember conversations with Huntress taking place that day.

Kerinko said that he recalls the fighters had some communications problems once they were scrambled over Cleveland that day. Active air defense scrambles are turned over to NORAD as soon by ATC as soon as possible. Kerinko said the fighters could not talk to other aircraft. There are three frequencies, none of which worked. They had to hold in their positions.

The FAA gave locator information to the fighters. ATC uses fixed radio distance to locate aircraft, whereas the military rely on latitudes and longitude to determine locations of other planes. This is more difficult for the controllers to picture. On 9-11, NORAD was asking for the "lat and longs," said Kerinko.

Kerinko said he was not involved in any way with the grounding of the aircraft that day, nor did he speak to the command center or anyone in the Washington operations center that day.

He does not recall specifically if there were any military aircraft around UA 93 when it went down.

He said there haven't been too many changes at the Center since 9-11. Now, the military handbook is signed off on by DOD and FAA. It was updated to cover hijack and scramble procedures; developed more air space for the military's use; the military exercises are much more frequent and FAA involvement has increasingly participated in military exercises.

The flight path for a military exercise is predetermined. A code is given that it is a stolen or hijacked plane; NORAD scrambles; expedite the movement from the ground to the target of concern and the military brings the target into designated-use airspace to resolve the exercise. Through the exercise, the FAA controller provides normal assistance - FAA controller is now supposed to expedite (give him a straight path) in order to assist the fighter.

Prior to 9-11, fighter scrambles went directly into special use airspace and had no bearing on regular air traffic. Scramble aircraft were always given priority treatment.

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Before 9-11, scrambles never used to scramble anywhere but north. Now, they can go anywhere. Clearing traffic – standard ATC separation for all aircrafts required for fighters too.

9/11 Closed by Statute

The military operations position was at one time a full-time position (back in 1981 and remained so for 6 years). Then the military was reducing the number of missions it was doing.

Ayers is still the Center's point of contact at NEADS. Kerinko said he has a great relationship with NEADS. Problems are raised, addressed, and resolved. On a national level, the FAA – NEADS relationship may need to improve, but his relationship with his counterpart at NEADS has not been that affected by 9-11.