

MFR 0407321

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MEMORANDUM FOR THE RECORD

Event: Interview with Ken Merchant, NORAD

Date: Friday, November 14, 2003

Special Access Issues: None

Prepared by: Dana Hyde

Team Number: 8

Location: Via Telephone – GSA Conference Room to Cheyenne Mountain, CO

Participants - Non-Commission: Ken Merchant, Col. Hayden (attorney)

Participants - Commission: Dana Hyde, Miles Kara, Kevin Shaeffer

Commission staff informed Mr. Merchant at the outset that the subject of the conversation was the process that NORAD follows in designing and constructing military exercises; the Commission would probably want to interview him again later regarding his knowledge of specific exercises.

Mr. Merchant is the joint exercise design manager for NORAD, and has been with NORAD J3 (or J38) for 17 years. His focus is on designing CPX exercises, especially with other Commands and with the Joint Staff. His office is made up of 7-8 people, and is run by a Canadian two-star general from J3. Approximately half of the people in his office focus on FTX exercises, while the other half design CPX exercises.

NORAD follows the Joint Training Strategy, and has also developed its own instruction for exercise procedures (NORAD Instruction 10-45). Exercises are built according to Joint Mission Essential Tasks (JMETs), through a series of multi-stage planning conferences. The first planning conference is held roughly 12-18 months in advance of the exercise, and is called the Concept Development Conference (CDC). This is a "broad brush" look at the exercise that involves roughly a dozen participants; representatives from the NORAD regions may attend or it may be limited to NORAD HQ personnel. Issues such as whether the exercise will involve a war or peacetime scenario and what agencies/components should participate are considered. The CDC is followed by an Initial Planning Conference (IPC) in which the specifications for the exercise are briefed in great detail. The IPC is followed by a Mid Planning Conference (MPC), held approximately six months before the exercise, in which the exercise is actually drafted. The Final Planning Conference (FPC) is held four to six weeks before the exercise and focuses on finalizing concrete details of the JMETs. By the time of the MPC and FPC 50 people or more may be involved in the conferences, depending on the particular exercise.

A series of documents related to the exercise are produced in tandem with the conferences. The Concept and Objective (C&O) Statement is typically a 1-2 page document based on the JMETs. It is staffed up to and signed by the commander, and

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serves as a contract with the commander regarding what the exercise will look like. The Exercise Specification (EXSPEC) is built by the staff around the C&O Statement and provides general guidance to staff and components about the exercise. The Exercise Plan (EXPLAN) is a lengthy document put out to a wide range of players and is a "soup-to-nuts" on the whole exercise. The Controlled Staff Instructions (COSIN) is an "eyes only" trusted agent document that contains details of the exercise, including the Master Scenario Events Listing (MSEL).

At the end of this process a briefing -- called a Significant Military Exercise Brief -- is given to the Joint Staff and other relevant agencies (e.g., State Department). Mr. Merchant described this as a "mother may I" briefing to proceed with the exercise. NORAD also produces books containing a complete set of these exercise documents for the Exercise Director and/or Senior Controller. The C&O Statement is the only document the commander officially signs off on.

Regarding the role of intelligence and J2 in exercise planning, Mr. Merchant stated that J2 is actively involved in the process; J2 builds scenarios, as much as possible, on real world situations (such as country, order of battle, etc.) and focus on the capabilities of the enemy as opposed to the political intent. He described J2 staff as "very proactive" with respect to hijacking and terrorist threat scenarios. He was not familiar with So/LIC and said, to his knowledge, they do not have a role in planning the exercise scenarios. When asked whether other DoD counterterrorism officials provide input to the exercises he replied "no" and added "our mission was external. . . all sensors were pointed out . . . our fighters were on the coast."

After an exercise, essentially two types of after action documents are produced: (1) An evaluation report that is usually drafted by a contractor and briefed to the J3; and (2) Lessons learned that are incorporated into a NORAD database (and sometimes later added to the JCS lessons learned database).

His point of contact for exercise and training at CONR is the IG's office; at NEADS the training portfolio is housed in the Deputy Commander's office (?).

With respect to record keeping, Mr. Merchant stated that NORAD's policy is to minimize classified information. His office only keeps hard copies of exercises going back one year, and computer/hard drive information going back "roughly" to 1998. He was aware that the Commission requested exercise information dating back to 1993; he did not believe that his office had such information, but stated that NORAD regions or sectors might have it. He indicated that the regions and sectors may not have been asked to search for exercise information requested by the Commission; only NORAD HQ had responded. Mr. Merchant also did not believe that his office retained other exercise information -- such as after action reviews -- for exercises prior to 1998.

With respect to NORAD's mission and its impact on exercise planning, Mr. Merchant stated that prior to 9/11 NORAD's mission did not change much. He stated that the CONPLAN NORAD is operating under today is from 1998; in 2000 there was a draft of

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a new CONPLAN but it was never approved. Today NORAD is trying to get a new CONPLAN approved and exercises that are currently ongoing are part of the process to validate the new CONPLAN.

Regarding specific exercises, Mr. Merchant stated that each year NORAD runs two major CPX exercises; prior to 2003 it was the Vigilant Guardian series, today the series is called Vigilante Overview. In terms of FTX exercises, NORAD runs the Amalgam Warrior and Amalgam Virgo series; the latter are "specialty type" exercises. Mr. Merchant cannot remember a time in the last 33 years when NORAD has NOT run a hijack exercise, but stated that they were always resolved peacefully, that is, NORAD did not project shooting down a hijacked aircraft. Prior to 9/11 NORAD did not run an exercise involving a hijacking over the National Capital Region (NCR), but there were *events* within exercises that involved the NCR. He stated that other agencies – such as the FAA – may have been involved in a NORAD exercise prior to 9/11 at the ARTCC level, but not at the national level. The possible exception to this that he could recall was the Positive Force exercise series, which is a CJCS multi-agency exercise with national players.