MFR 04020016

MEMORANDUM FOR THE RECORD

Event: Michael Tuohey, former U.S. Airways customer service representative

Type: Interview

Prepared by: John Raidt

Special Access Issues: None

Teams: 7

Date: May 27, 2004

Participants (non-Commission): Michael Tuohey; Kathleen Guilfoyle—outside counsel to U.S. Airways.

Participants (Commission): Dr. Gerald Dillingham, John Raidt

Location: Interview conducted by conference call from GSA Conference Room; Washington, DC

Background

[U] Mr. Tuohey started working for the airlines in 1967. He said he worked in many different capacities during his long career until become a Customer Service Agent. He went to work for U.S. Airways in Portland, Maine beginning in June of 1986, after having been transferred from Boston.

[U] On 9/11 Mr. Tuohey served as a Customer Service Agent working at the U.S. Airways' ticket counter at Portland International Jetport in Maine. He checked in hijackers Mohammed Atta and Abdulazziz al Omari for their flight on Colgan Air 5930 from Portland, Maine to Boston Logan Airport on the morning of 9/11.

Morning of 9/11

[U] Mr. Tuohey said about three or four other agents were working the ticket counter that morning, but he was the agent who checked in Atta and al Omari. He knows that to be the case because he remembers them and also the Passenger Name Record for the hijackers (which has a field and code indicating the agent who checked in the passenger) reflected that he was the check-in agent.

[U] Mr. Tuohey recalled hearing about the first plane that crashed into the WTC. He said everyone he was with thought it was an accident of some kind. However, when they heard about the second plane hitting the WTC they knew these weren't accidents. He said that when Diane Graney of U.S. Airways heard that one of the flights that crashed

into the WTC was an American Airlines flight out of Boston, she looked into the computer and saw that two passengers (Atta and al Omari) had taken Cogan Air Flight 5930 out of Portland and were aboard Flight 11. She asked Mr. Tuohey if he had checked them in. Mr. Tuohey told her that he did remember them.

Contact with the Hijackers

[U] Mr. Tuohey said that he remembered the two hijackers because when they came to the counter area they didn't look like they knew where they were going. He asked them if they were on a U.S. Airways flight. Atta replied to him that they were and Mr. Tuohey told the two men to come over to his counter and he would help them. He remembered they were arriving to check-in a little late. (The PNR record shows that Mr. Tuohey checked them in at 5:43 a.m. The time is logged on the PNR at the time the bag tags are printed).

[U] Mr. Tuohey said that Atta checked two bags, and al Omari did not check any. Mr. Tuohey said that he asked the two security questions required to be asked of all passengers who check bags about whether they had packed their own bags or had left them unattended. Atta responded to the questions verbally, and al Omari shook his head. Mr. Tuohey said he wondered whether al Omari even spoke English because he seemed to be following Atta and didn't say anything verbally. (Staff note: considering that al Omari didn't check any bags, was it necessary that he be asked the two security questions).

[U] Mr. Tuohey said that there wasn't anything suspicious about them. He remembered that when he printed the baggage claim tickets and put them in the envelope with the boarding pass, Atta looked at the paperwork and asked about why he wasn't given his boarding pass for the American Airlines flight out of Boston. Atta said something in the form of a question such as "One stop check-in?" Mr. Tuohey explained that they would have to check-in with American in Boston to get their boarding pass for Flight 11. Mr. Tuohey stated that Atta's clenched his jaw and said to Tuohey with some irritation, "They told me one step check-in." Mr. Tuohey said that he remembered thinking that Atta looked like he was about to get mad. Mr. Tuohey then informed them that they had better get going or they were going to miss their flight. Mr. Tuohey stated that he thought that Atta was about to say something in anger but instead spun around and walked away with al Omari toward the checkpoint.

[U] Mr. Tuohey said that he recalled that Atta and al Omari presented Drivers' licences as their form of ID. At first he thought they were New Jersey licenses but then remembered they were Florida. He recalls that they were bluish.

CAPPS Selection

[U] Mr. Tuohey said that when a passenger was identified by CAPPS I as a selectee at Portland Jetport, the passenger's checked bag would be held off their airplane until it was confirmed that the owner of the bag was aboard the plane (Positive Passenger Bag

Match). He said that the only reason checked bags would be hand-searched was if the passengers did not properly answer the two security questions. In that event, the customer service agent would have to request a screener from Globe Security to conduct the search. He said that he is not aware of any physical search of Atta's checked bags.

Checkpoint screening at Portland

[U] Mr. Tuohey didn't perceive that the checkpoint at Portland to be any better or worse than any other airport checkpoint.

Suspicious Activities

[U] Mr. Tuohey said the he had never seen Atta and al Omari before, and was not aware of anyone at the airport who thought they had seen either of them prior to 9/11.

Recommendations

[U] Mr. Tuohey said that the U.S. should have behavior profilers at airports to randomly interview people to look for suspicious activity the way they do overseas

[U] He also believes that there shouldn't be one stop check-in for multi-leg flights. Requiring additional check-in gives you other chances to catch bad people.

[U] He said it's a mistake to allow passengers to check-in bags for flights at hotels like they do in Las Vegas. While such services may be more convenient for passengers they do no represent good security practices.