

MEMORANDUM FOR THE RECORD

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Event: Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) Eastern Region

Type of event: Interview with Ron Ruggeri

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Special Access Issues: ID Check

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Team Number: 8

Location: 1 Aviation Plaza, Jamaica, NY 11434

Participants - Non-Commission: Mary McCarthy (Office of Regional Counsel, Eastern Region, FAA – One Aviation Plaza, RM 561, Jamaica, NY 11434: P 718-553-3259, F 718-995-5699)

Participants - Commission: Team 8: John Farmer, John Azzarello, Geoffrey Brown

Note: Please refer to the interview recording for further details.

Background:

Ruggeri started with the FAA in December of 1975.

He first became a regional representative in June of 1989. He was a Quality Assurance Staff Manager on September 11, 2001 (9/11). In February of 2003 he became Division Branch Manager for Air Traffic Operations.

The Quality Assurance (QA) staff manager reviews all accidents, incidents, operational errors (deviations, loss of separation), Freedom of Information Requests (FOIRs), and all review of air traffic services. The regional QA office supports the field work of different facilities' QA offices, just as the Regional Office supports the air traffic centers and facilities.

Ruggeri had only three specialists (one of which was Larry Cunningham) in QA underneath his authority on 9/11. Their role was to support his work, but they did not work with the field offices to compile materials for the 9/11 accident packages.

The 802011 FAA manual details what is required of QA representatives in their investigations of air traffic incidents.

Accident Package:

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The last facility that spoke with an aircraft is responsible for compiling the accident package. That package is held and reviewed at the region. The originals are kept at the locations that handled the aircraft. The final accident package is sent to Headquarters.

The 9/11 packages were handled slightly differently. The packages were split between the Great Lakes, Eastern and New England regions due to the level of work involved in the task.

9/11:

Ruggeri's pager read "AA 11 hijacked, and coming your way." He saw that and forwarded the page to the managers of New York Air Route Control Center (ZNY) and New York TRCON (N90). Both those facilities had received the information already. He received that page from his counterpart in New England, Tom Benson. Ruggeri was in his office and sent the information to Frank Hatfield and Rich Ducharme.

He received a call from a general aviation pilot who was a construction worker in lower Manhattan through a female worker at the Automated Flight Service Station in Islip. The pilot had called an 800 number that connected him to an information line for pilots to receive weather updates through the FAA. The caller informed Ruggeri that a 767 had struck the WTC.

Ruggeri informed Ducharme of this information. Ruggeri went to the ROC (Regional Operations Center) and Ducharme went to check the television. Ruggeri worked to set up the Crisis Command Center, and could see smoke from the windows of the conference room he was in. Ruggeri began calling various facilities to construct a working picture of what was ongoing,

Ruggeri called the watch desk at ZNY, and was informed from Bruce Barrett that the impact was a terrorist event. Barrett checked a Situational Display per Ruggeri's request to locate AA 11, and it showed AA 11 in Whiskey 105 but on a coast track (since the computer was searching for the target, and projecting its flight path).

Within minutes of these events there were FBI Agents assigned to Kennedy Airport, specifically at the Region's office. Flight standards, flight surgeon, air traffic, airways facilities, security and legal were all present at the Crisis Center.

After the impact of United Airlines Flight 175 (UAL 175), the number of possible hijacked airplanes within the system grew to include up to twelve suspected hijacked aircraft.

During this time period the Crisis Center was receiving ongoing reports on aircraft that were suspected of being hijacked. He spoke with John Hendershot at Dulles Tower, and Ruggeri could hear in the background a voice saying the White House should be evacuated; he continued listening to the background of the phone-line with Hendershot

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and heard that the aircraft struck the Pentagon. Hendershot had a line open to Washington National Airport and to the Secret Service.

AAT20 (investigations and allegations), Doug Gould, Tony Ferrany, and Tony Mello were all involved in receiving information and radar/voice data from Ruggeri on 9/11.

In order to get this information to the higher FAA ranks Ruggeri trusted that those people at headquarters he was passing information to would pass the information on to a higher level.

Flow of information:

Ruggeri noted that the information he received was verified through his own channels before he passed it along to headquarters. He also noted that there were FBI agents at the headquarters who, when they received information, would call back to the Region to verify that information. So to his understanding there were dual channels to filter the accuracy of information that was being produced.

Ruggeri noted that the Region does ideally act as a funnel for information between the facilities and headquarters, but at times depending on the situation headquarters may bypass the region for expediency.

Identity of aircraft:

Regarding the first impact, Ruggeri received information from the construction worker whose phone call he received. Boston Air Route Control Center (ZBW) informed him that they had lost contact with two of their air carriers. Ruggeri initially thought it must have been a small plane that struck the north tower. Ruggeri noted that this belief changed when he saw the damage from outside the office window and he could see the smoke coming from the tower, he knew that the aircraft that caused that damage could not have been a small general aviation aircraft.

Regarding AA 77 and UAL 93, Ruggeri commented that they did not have an immediate knowledge of the flights' identities.

Ruggeri did not recall any knowledge of Tom White's efforts on 9/11 to build radar data from New York TRACON (N90) on the aircraft that hit the World Trade Center (WTC). Nor did he have any knowledge of a Sikorski helicopter striking the WTC. Nor did he have any knowledge of ELTs on 9/11. Ruggeri noted that they did receive requests from the New York Police Department (NYPD) to analyze radar data and located one of their helicopters in the vicinity of the WTC the morning of 9/11.

After further questioning Ruggeri noted there was what he remembers to be an IBM helicopter that dropped off passengers and returned north on the morning of 9/11. There was a thought that that helicopter might have hit the WTC, or that the helicopter was monitoring what occurred with malicious intent. And that is why the Region was asked

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by the FBI to analyze the data surrounding this helicopter. His recollection is that this matter was quickly dismissed, and did not contribute to a rumor that three aircraft struck the WTC:

Ruggeri recalled no information that would have led the Region to believe that AA 11 was still airborne after 8:46 AM.

Commission staff presented Ruggeri with a timeline document to review that is labeled "AAL 11/N334AA" on the upper right corner. Ruggeri noted that the "1200" code is general aviation that is not being controlled by air traffic. His opinion was that the timeline display attempts to recreate the radar picture on the morning of 9/11 to account for any transponder changes that may have occurred aboard AA 11 and UAL 175.

Telephone conferences:

The Regional Telecom was staffed by Rich Ducharme, and served the purpose of gathering information from the facilities, and communicating back to the facilities the need to remain calm. All facilities were on monitoring this line.

The telecons were on open speaker phones, but could be picked up for security reasons.

Aftermath:

Ruggeri noted that now there are satellite phones at all the major FAA facilities. There is a function on some of these phones to allow immediate access to certain phone bridges.

Ruggeri also noted that the Crisis Command Center should be fully ready to use at all times since it took more than two hours to fully create the Crisis Center on 9/11. Ruggeri noted that the backup site for the Region is at ZNY.

Ruggeri commented that there are not practice runs conducted to train for setting up the Crisis Center.

Record of events:

Ruggeri commented that immediately on 9/11 FAA Headquarters began asking for voicetapes. ZBW digitized the voicetapes from the flights, and then transferred the digitized recordings directly to Ruggeri. Ruggeri passed this information to FAA Headquarters. This recording is compiled from the real to real tapes, and then transferred to a digital audio recording. Ruggeri heard the threatening voices from this recording, and gave that information to the FBI. Ruggeri commented that he received the digital recordings from ZBW later in the day of 9/11.

Each division had a log of what was ongoing. He noted to Commission staff that in the Crisis Command Center there was most likely someone taking notes on what was going

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on. Ruggeri noted that the security log in particular was detailed. Ruggeri has never seen any of these logs after 9/11.

McCarthy noted that until recently there was an FAA Historian that operated out of Washington Headquarters.

Ruggeri noted that Sue Zurilo kept a record from the Crisis Center on 9/11.

Military notification:

Ruggeri commented that he has never notified the military personally, but that all the facilities now have direct lines to the military. He also noted that he believed there were "push-button" lines that linked to the air defense operations from the facilities when he was a controller.

Lufthansa:

Ruggeri was the assistant air traffic manager at Kennedy Airport, and was on the air traffic telecom. His supervisor, Jimmy Jackson, received a page that they had a hijacked aircraft. Ruggeri brought the FBI officers who arrived to the Tower to the operations desk. Ruggeri patched the FBI into a call to the Luftahansa hijacker. They established communications and the FBI agents spoke with the hijacker for the rest of the event.

Recommendations:

Ruggeri noted that he believes aircraft should not be allowed to fly along the Hudson channel. He noted that for upcoming events there should be better security. Secret Service makes a request to the military Special Operations and the FAA, and works to accommodate both their customers and the need for security.

Ruggeri noted the importance of communications for both the upper levels of authority and for public notice. The FAA discovered later on that certain equipment (Nextel phones and satellite phones) are necessary in the case of an emergency.

Ruggeri also noted that there currently is no method to insure their employees can travel to their FAA facilities for continuity of air space traffic flow in the case of an emergency.

Ruggeri further noted a high concern of the lack of security over general aviation flights. He thinks the airspace restrictions and expanded radar coverage should be examined to account for this, especially over threatened sites. In this context, Ruggeri noted that there are over 250 aircraft ports within the immediate airspace vicinity of New York City.

Threatened points:

9/11 Closed by Statute

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9/11 Closed by Statute

Hypothesis on UAL 93:

Ruggeri noted that he holds the belief that the hijackers of UAL 93 overheard a FAA controller mentioning there was "something" approaching UAL 93's location "moving quickly", and that the hijackers thought this was a military response. Thus the hijackers crashed the aircraft.

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