

MEMORANDUM FOR THE RECORD

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Event: North Eastern Air Defense Sector (NEADS) field site visit

Type of event: Interview with TSgt Jeffrey LaMarche, and TSgt Jeffrey Richmond

Date: Monday, October 27, 2003

Special Access Issues: Clearance check

Prepared by: Geoffrey Brown

Team Number: 8

Location: Commander's Conference Room, Building 102

Participants - Non-Commission: TSgt Jeffrey LaMarche, TSgt Jeffrey Richmond, Air Surveillance Technicians, and Lt. Col. Fred Davies, Esq. (National Guard, former JAG attorney)

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

LaMarche began his career with the Navy. He worked for Lockheed Martin for 11 years, and joined NEADS in August of 1986. He went through a number of positions at NEADS. His shift did not begin at NEADS until 9:00AM on 9/11.

Richmond joined the AF in 1985. He was a crew chief for B52s and for A10s, and then joined NEADS. When NEADS became a National Guard mission he transferred to the Guard. On the morning on 9/11 he was the Assistant Air Surveillance Technician (AST).

An AST is the top position in surveillance. They oversee all the equipment on the floor. They also operate radar. In order to qualify they begin training with a qualified instructor. There is simulated and live training. It takes up to 150 days. There are also academic training modules incorporated. They finally must qualify through the standing evaluation process. Overall responsibility is held by Master Corporal Childhouse (Canadian) at NEADS for Air Surveillance training.

Prior to 9/11 Richmond dealt with hijack training that postulated the "typical" hijack scenario. The primary responsibility of an AST in that circumstance would be to maintain the track of the aircraft. They had never been trained in circumstance that the plane would be hijacked and used as a weapon.

The Air Combat Command and Control Operations Manual is referred to by the Commission. LaMarche explains that he does not believe there is ever an Optimal Radar Air Picture except for all the radar functioning appropriately at a given time. LaMarche comments that the FAA, to his understanding, only works off of a beacon transmission.

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Richmond explains that primary targets can be clouds, birds, tractor trailers, etc. LaMarche explains to Commission staff that the radar accounts for primary returns that are most likely other than aircraft. ARSR 4 (Air Route Surveillance Radar) is "3D" radar that receives better height finding and reads Mode 4 – a discreet classified code for military aircraft that is different from the Mode 2 normal military squawk. Mode 4 is used to identify that the aircraft is friendly. Mode 2 and Mode 4 assist the Air Surveillance mission by letting them know the identity of the aircraft without questioning the aircraft.

J53 was scheduled to go down on the morning of 9/11, according to Richmond. That particular radar is off Cape Cod and has a 250 mile range. Richmond commented that the radar went down during normal operations, but with "co-owned radars" that is something that is normal. Also, the radar is overlapped, so the need for radar to undergo routine maintenance is accounted for.

The Air Surveillance Officer position is not filled at NEADS, nor was it filled on 9/11. For all purposes, Richmond was the senior personnel for Air Surveillance on 9/11.

84 RADS maintains a book assessing the capability of each radar site, according to LaMarche.

On 9/11, LaMarche and Richmond received information from the ID section. They would pass that information to their "trackers", so the trackers know where to look on their radar capabilities for a target. This information is relayed to the MCC.

The MCC transfers target information to the Air Control Weapons Officer (ACWO) or the FO (Fighter Officer). Richmond may speak to those positions about information pertaining to tracking equipment status in a sector.

Richmond stated that he underwent a positional change and briefing the morning of 9/11 at roughly 7:00AM or 7:20AM. He gave his trackers a brief regarding the exercise, and began surveillance on normal operations. Regarding J53, he would not be able to recall the radar site quickly since it was going to undergo major repair.

Lt. Powell called Richmond with the information that there was a real world hijack underway. He opened up his checklist, and informed the trackers that they should do so as well. Col. Deskins and the ID section began tracking for the aircraft. Richmond followed his checklist, and brought in additional staffing. With their usual training regarding hijacks, the situation would be one in which they would know where the aircraft was. But on 9/11, since the transponder was off, they began looking for a "search target". If it looked like the right target, he would report that to the MCC. There were some targets that started out as "search" but then began a beacon code. So Richmond does not recall a track that was for sure AA 11.

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Richmond only speaks with the FAA regarding radar. His "DQM" dealt entirely with the FAA on 9/11. He received a call from New York TRACON asking if AA 11 "was still flying." This was after the first WTC hit. Richmond's ID told him that after the first WTC hit it was still possible that AA 11 was still flying. But the second time he asked them, after the call from New York TRACON, his ID section said they could not confirm that it was not, but he personally had a strong indication at that point that AA 11 was not still airborne.

Richmond does not know who put in the "Z" point on AA 11. When Richmond puts down "Z" points it is because of a pre-existing radar hit. After one exists, Richmond assigns a tracking technician to that point. He informs the tracking technician of parameters to search in for reads around that point. On 9/11 Richmond had two tracking technicians at first, but the end of the day they had five tracking technicians involved.

When LaMarche began that morning, he went straight to Richmond to receive details. They had to decide on the best method to search for targets. They set up a second team of an AST and a DQM. They picked up another possible flight, what was believed to be a fifth hijacking, and watched that track.

By that time there were roughly six or seven tracking technicians; they used every available radar on that day for tracking.

One tracker is assigned one particular area to watch within each AOR.

Richmond stated that he does not remember when it was confirmed that AA 11 had hit the WTC; but that it was shortly thereafter that he was informed that the second tower had been hit. It was at this point that anything within thirty miles of New York needed to be treated as a search target. Richmond does not remember any knowledge of the developing story with UAL 175.

They received the report of another target. He told Sgt. Allen to "look around NY" – in Washington, this message was relayed to other traffickers. He called for a third Tracking Tech (TT) to come onto the floor.

Richmond stated that at this point they may have gotten information regarding the third flight reported hijack. Thus he told his TT to look at NYC, approximately 40 miles outside the city. He then gave his other TT instructions to watch Washington, DC.

When LaMarche came on duty, he was told of the location of traffic.

The "Z" point for AA 11 was fed to Richmond, and a Tracking Technicians received that information to know how to assess where AA 11 might have been.

LaMarche believes the aircraft the Operations Floor was controlling the most was the fifth hijacking possibility; on that flight "everything" matched the profile. Commission staff believes this flight was Delta 1989.

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When Richmond first heard of the impact, he requested that appropriate capacity respond. The ID desk claimed that AA 11 was still involved.

Based on the CNN reports that it was a small target that initially hit the WTC, Richmond can see how something would be confused in the area

Commission staff referred to an FAA transcript in which a Richmond is recorded.

NOTE: The transcript is ODC 7 not ODC 12. ODC 7 is the position that Richmond spoke into. But the ODC 7 does capture some of the context of Richmond's actions on 9/11.

Commission staff then reviews with LaMarche and Richmond a recording provided by NEADS.

At 28:52 on the DRM1 DAT 2 Channel 15 AST Commission staff reviews a point in which Richmond narrows down his information that AA 11 is the probable civilian aircraft that struck the WTC, but it is not confirmed. The recording continues and Richmond attempts to receive confirmation on if the Otis fighters had been launched.

Commission staff continued to review the recording to clarify the situational awareness of the Air Surveillance Operation at NEADS on 9/11.

Information that there is a possible second hijack is circulated through the Air Surveillance Operations at the 33 minute mark on the same recording.

Some of Richmond's incoming information was confused by the CNN and various reports. Much of the media reports were contradictory to the awareness incoming to the desk for Richmond. Richmond decided to "unplug" and speak with the MCC regarding the situation. This interaction is documented by a transcript provided to Commission staff.

Information that there may be a third hijacking first originates on tape at the 40 minute mark.

At the 9:12AM point on 9/11 there apparently has not been as of yet a mention that would indicate the Air Surveillance system is aware of a direct threat from 77 to Washington, DC.

Richmond stated that he does not know when Langley was directly put on Battle Stations, but does recall he was informed at some point that morning that nation-wide air defense capabilities and Air Force assets went to battle stations.

Richmond stated that he insisted the J53 radar be put back on line at some capacity.

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Richmond became aware of the tankers being airborne on 9/11 as a refueling asset for the fighters, as well as the fighters' location, but does not recall where exactly they were in relation to each other.

At 13:18 UTC is a mention of "pushing the fighters into New York." So it is at this point that Richmond receives awareness of the scramble fighter's location, based on the audio file.

At 52:30-39 in the audio file, there is a communication that AA 11 may still be airborne. Richmond explains to Commission staff that this information was relayed to him through the MCC. He relayed this to his trackers at the radar positions.

Richmond explained to Commission staff that he thought a scramble from Langley should be imminent because of the possibility of AA 11 still heading south, presumably towards Washington, DC.

The radar search only point referred to as the NCA on the transcript is located in Washington, DC.

When Richmond refers to the track as "fading" in the transcript, it is the loss of the track. The computer will "extrapolate" the most likely position for the aircraft for a period, but then it "fades out". Refer to Commission staff handwritten notes and the NEADS transcript for the context of this.

At 1:14:15 on the audio file there is a "reported aircraft near the Pentagon."

At 1:19:00 (approximately 0949 EDT) on the audio file is the first mention that the Pentagon was hit.

Richmond assumed that the Sears Tower may have been a target since his trackers were looking at Delta 1989's flight path.

BRAVO 257 Track number from Long Island pointed out to Richmond as a possible search target at the 1:26:00 mark on the audio file.

Force Protection BRAVO advised at 1:27:00 mark on audio file.

Air Surveillance works with the 103rd to continue bring aboard a greater air sovereignty capability.

Commission staff ends the play back of the audio file.

LaMarche and Richmond both comment that the training was sufficient for their operations on 9/11. Post 9/11 they received a temporary system that helps them monitor internal radar sites. They will receive more radar, and the consuls they received are color, which makes it a good tool for situational awareness. There is still a functionality

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necessity with the Q Radar, but the new equipment still should do. For example, the REU is important, and is the ability to validate a search check out of the raw radar data. This is only available with the Q. The NCS system that is in play right now allows them to separate information from different radars. The new system allows them to pick out which radar is feeding which information. The NCS loses track continuity at times. If the track fades radar coverage to quickly the system jumps to conclusions to quickly. The NCS does not allow a manual initiation of a track. It is an auto-initiate. They would like auto-initiate back for the new system.

LaMarche vaguely recalls talk over an exercise in which the FAA would control a fighter. LaMarche comments that they do that currently in regards to maintaining separation from air traffic.

LaMarche noted to Commission staff that as far as surveillance is concerned there is not much different they could have done without the notification that there is a particular problem with a specific aircraft.

Neither LaMarche nor Richmond underwent a formal review after the 9/11 events. LaMarche informs Commission staff that a historian was making a history of the event for the 1st AF. This took place within a week or two weeks of 9/11. LaMarche recalls he was on the base for three or four days. The unit historian is a new position here, and was not involved in 9/11 history.

After 9/11 there were changes to parts of the checklists.

NOTE: Time notes on this MFR refer to the Window Media Player time signature on the above mentioned audio files provided by NEADS for Commission staff review during the field visit.

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