

MFR 04014820

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MEMORANDUM FOR THE RECORD

Event: Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) New York Air Route Center

Type of event: Interview

Date: Tuesday, October 1, 2003

Special Access Issues: None

Prepared by: Geoffrey Brown

Team Number: 8

Location: FAA New York Air Route Center, Rokonkomo, New York

Participants - Non-Commission: Alfred R. Johnson, Jr., FAA Deputy Regional Consul,
Eastern Region

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

NOTE: Please refer to the interview transcript for a complete account.

Background:

Rosenberg began working with the FAA in 1969, after working as an air traffic controller (ATC) in the US Air Force. He started at LaGuardia Tower, and then went to the New York Common Air Control arm at Kennedy Airport. He was qualified in all positions of operations in that facility. From there, Rosenberg went to the regional office for New York as a staff specialist, and thereafter came to ZNY as a controller.

Rosenberg was involved in the air traffic controller strike in 1981. Afterwards he was able to return to the FAA due to a legal issue, and became an air traffic supervisor at LaGuardia Tower. In 1985 Rosenberg started working at New York Center (ZNY) as an operational supervisor. After that, he became a traffic management unit (TMU) supervisor. Rosenberg noted to Commission staff that he spent time at the regional office to receive 75 points towards his career.

Rosenberg described the role of a TMU supervisor as a buffer between the outside world and the ATCs in the center. They are responsible to regulate the amount of traffic going through a sector. They use miles and trails restrictions, and reroute airplanes in order to do this. Rosenberg noted that a TMU supervisor also has greater situational awareness on the national airspace picture than an area supervisor or air traffic controller. The TMU supervisor also is involved in higher levels and frequency of communication with the other centers and with Herndon Command Center. Rosenberg noted that an operational supervisor is concerned with one portion of a whole air space picture, whereas the TMU supervisor is concerned with the whole.

Rosenberg has no oceanic operational experience.

9/11:

On 9/11, Rosenberg, Peter Mulligan and Bruce Barrett all were assigned as TMU supervisors. Both the OMIC and the STMC directly coordinate with TMU. A controller told Rosenberg there was a "serious problem" with the aircraft AA 11 from Boston Center. Rosenberg dialed on a "hotline phone"

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American Airlines' dispatch for information on AA 11. ZBW was still on the line, and they were both told on a recorded line that American Airlines believed the "number one" stewardess had been stabbed and that hijackers had taken control of the airplane cabin. There was no mention from American Airlines' dispatch that indicated the hijackers possessed a firearm. After the conversation with American Airlines' dispatch, Rosenberg called into a hotline with ZBW that connected them to ZNY, Herndon Command Center, and the Great Lakes Regional Director. Rosenberg explained to Commission staff that the ZBW manager informed the parties on the hotline that ZBW was attempting to have the military scramble fighters but was unsuccessful. Rosenberg commented that he is not sure who else, or what other organizations, may have been on that conference call. Rosenberg questioned the Command Center for further information regarding military involvement.

Rosenberg noted for Commission staff that his conversation with American dispatch was to receive information on whether or not AA 11 was an ongoing emergency or hijack. Rosenberg's career experience led him to believe that AA 11, as a hijacked aircraft, would probably land in Cuba. He noted to Commission staff that he told one of the TMU staff to call the air traffic arrival and departure towers for information regarding AA 11. He also noted that he thought Kennedy or Newark airports would be the only airports of use for the airplanes if in fact they were experiencing some form of emergency.

Rosenberg recollected that Pete Mulligan was speaking on one conference call regarding AA 11, and that Bruce Barrett was listening to the same hotline as Rosenberg.

Rosenberg noted to Commission staff that the ATCs lost the primary target that was associated with AA 11 at approximately a position 15 miles west of Kennedy airport, and there was a report of an ELT (Emergency Locator Transmitter) signal. Rosenberg next remembers a female voice on the phone call he was monitoring that informed him CNN reported an aircraft struck the WTC. Rosenberg commented that even at this point it was "unfathomable" to think the plane had hit the WTC. He thought Newark Tower delivered the first news of the event. Rosenberg noted to Commission staff that after he heard of the first incident on 9/11 he gave his phone and responsibilities to Ricky Bell, and left the building. Rosenberg explains to staff that he has a son who is a pilot, and was too emotional to continue in his position that morning.

Rosenberg recalls from the time he spent at TMU on the morning of 9/11 that the controllers were looking for a primary target, presumably AA 11, at 29,000 feet. Rosenberg explained that a controller can estimate the airspeed of a primary target by judging the distance a target skips between radar sweeps. He disagreed with the notion that the descent of the aircraft would indicate a drop in airspeed. Rosenberg commented that the aircraft would maintain its set speed since usually planes speed up when they descend. He also noted that ZNY radar does not read altitude, and is not equipped to tell the correct flight information on an aircraft without the mode C.

Rosenberg commented that requiring all planes to immediately land the morning of 9/11 probably saved many lives. He noted as well that the successful process of landing the planes quickly and safely saved lives.

Rosenberg told Commission staff he can not comment on UAL 175 since he had left the center by the time UAL 175 struck the south tower.

Military and the FAA:

Rosenberg noted to Commission staff that even prior to 9/11, the FAA had telephone lines to Northeast Air Defense Sector (aka HUNTRESS), and Giant Killer [Commission staff believes Giant Killer is a Navy operation that controls the east coast low altitude airspace]. Rosenberg does not know who answered those lines prior to 9/11, nor does he know if those entities could authorize a fighter scramble. Rosenberg continued by commenting that prior to 9/11 the FAA centers had very little awareness on how to communicate with the military. His only approach would have been to call the command center at Herndon, Virginia. He also noted that his knowledge of the location of air defense capabilities was limited to Otis AFB, Langley AFB and Atlantic City [Commission staff is aware that Atlantic City was not an

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active air defense base on 9/11]. Rosenberg further commented regarding military notification that he is not sure who had the direct responsibility for seeking military assistance, but he does not believe it is the responsibility of the center's military operations specialist (MOS).

Post 9/11 Rosenberg explained the procedure for handling events that indicate a hijack or other type of in-air security situation is to give information into the DEN line (Defense Events Network), and he is also aware that the military party that monitors the DEN line is responsible for the decision making from that point. Rosenberg noted he only has the authority and responsibility to inform the DEN line. Rosenberg noted his hope that the entity "on the other side" of the DEN line has more awareness and intelligence than the TMU at ZNY.

Procedures prior to 9/11:

Prior to 9/11, if a hijacked flight is on the ground the pilot signals that the flight is in an ongoing hijack by putting the aircraft's flaps down. If the pilot is speaking on frequency the pilot can use the term "trip" to signal the hijack to the controller. If the flight is in the air the pilot may also squawk the hijack notification frequency of "7500".

Prior to 9/11, if the flight was not communicating (Nordo) and had its transponder off Rosenberg would still not refer to the flight as a hijack. If the flight had a significant deviation from course Rosenberg would consider it an emergency condition. Rosenberg believes ZBW did not know if AA 11 was experiencing a mechanical emergency or a hijack, and Rosenberg passed this information to McCormack.

Concluding Remarks:

Rosenberg noted to Commission staff the need to inform passengers of ongoing air traffic events, so they can best handle the circumstance. He believes that no matter where an event is taking place, all the "appropriate" people should be immediately informed so they are able to increase their vigilance. Rosenberg noted that ACAR is a silent communication system that covertly signals a flight cockpit with information from the airline company.

Rosenberg also noted that now that it is known an attack can happen from within national borders the communications with the appropriate decision making parties are viewed as essential and quick. He noted that there is now an immediate military response, and in his opinion none of the parties involved are complacent again.