

MEMR 04016799



MEMORANDUM FOR THE RECORD

Event: Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) Boston Center Field Interview of Jennifer Donahue, Regional Executive Manager (REM) for Communications Information Security (COMSAT), FAA Regional Operations Center (ROC)

Type of event: Recorded Interview

Date: Monday, September 22, 2003

Special Access Issues: None

Prepared by: Geoffrey Brown and Miles Kara

Team Number: 8

Location: FAA Boston Center, Nashua, New Hampshire

Participants - Non-Commission: Chris Perito, FAA General Consul

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

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

Donahue's office at the FAA ROC in Burlington, Massachusetts is primarily a communications hub responsible for communications security, conferencing, and facilitating a steady flow of information amongst FAA entities in the Boston Center region, between Boston Center and other FAA regional centers, and finally connecting Boston Center administration with FAA administrative headquarters at the FAA Washington Operations Center (WOC).

On the morning of September 11, 2001 at the ROC there was a regional team meeting, so every administrative manager was already there. Approximately 0830 EDT Barry O'Connor received a call from Boston Center (Nashua, NH) reporting the hijack of American Airlines Flight 11 (AA11). Donahue's office immediately put the administrative managers in contact with the WOC, and proceeded to set up numerous conference calls between FAA entities. The ROC officially began handling the Boston Center and New England region communication priorities after AA11 impacted 1 World Trade Center, but Barry O'Connor was probably informed of the hijack prior to impact.

During the immediate aftermath, and the days following 9/11 COMSAT staff had some difficulty identifying which conference call, and which conference net, to place callers in. The COMSAT has 120 lines, and these lines were fielded by four personnel, including Donahue. Often the callers requested to be placed in a net, or conference call, different than the one they intended to reach. For example, the FAA operated both a Tactical Net and a Tertiary Net. The Tactical Net was for FAA only, and was not secure. The Tertiary Net was not set up by the ROC, but the ROC could channel callers into it. This net consisted of many different federal agencies. Donahue was not clear on which net would be considered the "primary" net.

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The ROC handled events on 9/11 by using their experience from major aircraft accidents. They had no instructions and/or responsibility to contact NEADS, NORAD or any other military entity, and Donahue said that is the task of Boston Center's Traffic Management Unit (TMU).

Overall, Donahue stated COMSAT was adequately prepared to handle its role in the 9/11 FAA response, and that despite the heavy load of calls COMSAT operations ran correctly.

Prior to 9/11, the COMSAT's hijack procedure was to 1) contact the WOC; 2) contact the ROC's security division; and 3) contact the ROC's own management team. COMSAT had and has an Air Traffic Handbook (80-20) that considers a hijack a "security event", and prior to 9/11 required the ROC to contact WOC, but post 9/11 includes primary and secondary notification protocols (primary - WOC, ROC security; secondary - Regional Administrator, REM, Air Traffic, and Flight Standards). Since 9/11, the COMSAT has also installed a direct open line to the WOC.

Donahue stated she is concerned that post- 9/11 the COMSAT is not being adequately informed of changes to priority and policy from WOC. According to Donahue, COMSAT is part of Command, Control and Communication (C3) operations, and should be kept aware of policy change and should receive intelligence on possible security incidents. She stated COMSAT should be included in FAA emergency preparedness conferences. Donahue stated this combination of factors is the only way COMSAT can effectively keep information flowing internally among its counterpart among FAA's 9 regional centers, as well as flowing "upwards" to the WOC.

COMSAT at the ROC has no direct responsibilities to airline carriers.

COMSAT has not partaken in any post-9/11 drills, but Donahue believes its participation in preparing and passing information for Hurricane Isabel demonstrated the usefulness of their open line to the WOC. Donahue stated that the west coast regional operation centers may have participated in a hijack drill, or in a hazardous materials drill post-9/11. COMSAT does now have a general threat item in its team meetings, that usually includes information on any security threat level changes from the WOC.

Donahue has set up back-up capability at the Boston Center in Nashua, NH, and has practiced evacuation and relocation with her team. But Donahue stated that her team still should be directed by FAA on a clear and exact procedure of who to notify in another large scale security event, and that practice runs for an understanding of the roles of ROC personnel, as well as the line of succession within the ROC, would be useful.

Lastly, Donahue explained that the Air Traffic team at the ROC has a Crisis Management Room, with it's own communication abilities, that is used for weather events, and would be instrumental in coordinating FAA air traffic control (ATC) during other large scale events.