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MEMORANDUM FOR THE RECORD

AMERICAN AIRLINES

Event: Craig Marquis, Craig Parfitt, Joe Bertapelle, Mike Mulcahy

Type: Interview

Date: November 19, 2003

Special Access Issues: None

Prepared by: Lisa Sullivan and Bill Johnstone

Team Number: 7 and 8

Location: SOCC; American Airlines Headquarters; Ft. Worth, TX

Participants (non-Commission): Craig Parfitt, AA Managing Director of Dispatch Operations; Craig Marquis, AA System Operations Control (SOC) Manager; Michael Mulcahy, AA Manager of SOC Policies and Procedures; Joseph Bertapelle, AA Manager of SOC Operations Coordination/Air Traffic Systems; Desmond Barry, Condon & Forsyth, LLP; Christopher Christensen, Condon & Forsyth, LLP; Douglas Cotton, AA Senior Attorney

Participants (Commission): Sam Brinkley; Bill Johnstone; Miles Kara; John Raidt; Lisa Sullivan

**Background**

[U] All participants had access, before and during the interview, to several documents supplied by American Airlines (AA) to the Commission, including transcripts from relevant 9/11 phone calls about AA Flight #11 and AA personnel, and a timeline from the System Operations Command Center (SOCC).

**The Day of September 11, 2001**

[U] Marquis began discussing the day of 9-11 as he remembered it. His shift started at 6:00 a.m. Central Time. He reported that there was no weather throughout the system to speak of and therefore they anticipated a calm day. He received his usual operational briefing from the midnight shift supervisor when he came on duty.

[U] In his position as SOC Manager, he gets a lot of calls throughout the day at his station on the floor of the control room. His is a tactical role, and he receives complaints about a wide range of problems, including from crewmember families, maintenance crews and many others.

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[U] At 7:27 a.m. Central Time, Marquis received a call (that time is recorded on the SOC timeline – Marquis does not recollect the precise time) from Nydia Gonzalez with information about a stabbing on AA Flight #11. She was on the phone with a Flight Attendant (Betty Ong) onboard the flight, and Marquis wanted the call to be transferred to him, but Ms. Gonzalez was unable to do so. He immediately started an active log on the incident, reporting it as a flight emergency. The form he began is called an “FI”. To do so, he pulled up all the flight information on AA 11 available to him on the monitors at his workstation. At the outset, he was wondering where the flight was going to be taken to land.

[U] Marquis indicated that contact and communication with air traffic controllers was the responsibility of either Bill Halleck or the other AA SOC Air Traffic Control (ATC) coordinators (Marino and Jacobson). Marquis went about briefing them immediately on Gonzalez’ information from #11 flight attendant Betty Ong, yelling to the ATC coordinators, “Hey, contact ATC – Flight 11 is declaring an emergency.”

[U] Meanwhile, Ms. Gonzalez hung on the phone relaying information as Betty Ong gave it to her from her location at the back of the plane in the galley. She told Marquis that Betty Ong was the number 3 attendant on board. This information enabled him to cross check the information with the crew manifest (the NSG) he accessed for Flight 11, thereby confirming the plane was, in fact, Flight 11. He told Gonzalez, “I see they are flying,” because he had called up the flight track on his screen. At this point the plane was between Cap and Twain sectors on the map.

[U] Marquis did not assume the plane was hijacked with the information he had from Gonzalez at that time. Ong had reported that she could not reach the pilots by the internal communications system on the plane. He assumed this meant the pilots were busy executing an emergency landing and that explained why the cockpit crew weren’t answering the dispatcher trying to raise them repeatedly on ACARS and the radio.

[U] At 4 minutes 15 seconds into his call with Gonzalez, Marquis contacted Peggy Hauck, the Flight Dispatcher for Flight #11 at SOC desk 23, to “cell call” the cockpit of the plane. This is an old term used for direct calls to the pilot.

[U] Marquis recalled thinking at this point that he “doesn’t know why Ong doesn’t bang on the door of the cockpit” to get the pilot’s attention. Meanwhile, in the background Gonzales can be heard repeatedly telling Ong to remain calm, that she is doing a wonderful job and that “security has been notified” (meaning Marquis).

[U] Next, per Marquis’ request Gonzalez was asking Ong to provide a description of the men that went into the cockpit (this was around 7:31 a.m. Central Time, according to the SOCC timeline). Simultaneously, Marquis was telling Hauck to “look into it” and to contain and control the information on the flight. He said, “Peggy, you are handling flight 11,” effectively isolating the flight from the rest of the company’s air traffic system, and giving Hauck’s other flights to other dispatchers.

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[U] Marquis also attempted to reach Joe Bertapelle who was preparing to conduct the usual 7:45 a.m. Central Time conference call with AA senior leadership. At this point, Marquis had turned around at his desk and was looking at the Aircraft Situation Display (ASD) behind him. He then told Gonzalez that ATC and the flight crew were being contacted and that he knew that his direction to do so was being followed. Gonzalez reported that Ong had indicated that passengers in coach did not go what is going on yet.

[U] Corporate security was seeking information on who was sitting in 2A and 2B (which Ong had initially identified as the individuals who had gotten into the cockpit). Halleck was calling his contacts at the Herndon ATC command center, and at this point Marquis "grabbed" Mike Mulcahy and briefed him on what was happening, including the report of the stabbing of two flight attendants. Peggy Hauck was still trying to raise the plane any way she could, as Marquis continued to try to get all the information he could obtain on flight 11, while trying to make sure word of what was going on was not spread beyond those who needed to know.

[U] At 11 minutes, 27 seconds into the call Halleck reported back to Marquis, and around this time Gonzalez reported from Ong that a passenger in 9B (Daniel Lewin) had possibly been fatally stabbed by the passenger in 10B, who had gone on into the cockpit.

[U] After this (7:38 a.m. Central Time, according to the SOCC timeline) Marquis began to institute lock out procedures for Flight #11, which meant that no one could access the manifest without a special clearance. Marquis was trying to get information on the identity of the individuals who were in the cockpit.

[U] Marquis asked Halleck if ATC had information on whether #11 was descending, as Ong had told Gonzalez. (This was 18 minutes, five seconds into the call.) Halleck told him ATC didn't know because the transponder was off. Marquis was able to make a determination that the aircraft was going toward New York City. He didn't know if American was in communication with the Boston ATC center or with the Herndon ATC command center about altitude information.

[U] Halleck told Marquis that he learned from his ATC contacts that they could not get through to the pilots. Furthermore, Marquis was told that ATC was now handling it as a hijack and they seemed to think that it was indeed descending based just on the primary radar. Halleck thought JFK was the destination. Prior to the ATC declaration of a hijack (7:44 a.m. Central Time, according to Halleck's notes reflected in the SOCC timeline) Marquis instructed Halleck to tell ATC in Washington to handle Flight #11 as an emergency. (This was 19 minutes, 39 seconds into the Gonzalez-Marquis call.)

[U] At this point, Marquis was just confirming it was a hijack, and he wanted to make sure Halleck was communicating the emergency to the ATC system. In response to questions as to the amount of time it took to make the hijack determination, Marquis didn't recall exactly when he heard about the stabbing or that individuals entered the cockpit. He remembered initially thinking that maybe the intercom was broken or that the pilots were too busy preparing for an emergency landing to respond.

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[U] At about this point, the time stamp on the Gonzalez-Marquis call was reset to zero, apparently because the first tape stopped (or ran out) but was immediately replaced by a second recording of the conclusion of the same conversation. At approximately 20:40 into the total conversation, Marquis directed [redacted] to send out a SOCC (System Operations Command Center) notification (by pager) of 50 to 60 key AA officials.

[U] At the 7:45 a.m. Central Time senior management teleconference call, Joe Bertapelle relayed a lot of information Marquis and Halleck had received to the senior AA management including Vice President Robert Baker. (Baker took the AA lead in communicating with senior FAA leadership.)

[U] Meanwhile, Halleck told Marquis that ATC believed that the #11 pilot was "clicking his mike." Marquis and Hauck talked in order to determine "endurance numbers:" based on the estimated fuel and projected flight path, how far could the plane go? Marquis also received a report that AA's Boston office had someone in contact with another flight attendant on #11 (which turned out to be the Madeline Sweeney called to Michael Woodward). This occurred at just about the point that Gonzalez reported she had apparently lost contact with Ong. (This was all occurring at approximately 22 minutes, 50 seconds into the overall Gonzalez-Marquis call.) Shortly thereafter, Marquis terminated the call with Gonzalez.

[U] Marquis recalled that the conversation with Gonzalez was "tough" because he was unable to hear Ong directly. Other than the Boston call just referenced, he was unaware of any other calls made from #11 to American.

[U] At approximately 7:50 a.m. Central Time, Marquis looked up and noticed activity in the System Operations Command Center (SOCC). A few minutes later, he got a call from [redacted] at JFK who reported seeing smoke coming from the World Trade Center (WTC) and wondered if AA was "missing a plane." Marquis told him he didn't think so but he was checking. Someone from LaGuardia also called and said they witnessed a plane run into the WTC.

[U] Marquis thought at the time that Flight 11 was descending somewhere into the New York Area, and it didn't "click" at that point that this was related to the WTC incident. In this time frame, Halleck told Marquis that United was missing a plane. Shortly thereafter (between 8:00 and 8:05 a.m. Central Time), Halleck reported that contact had been lost with AA Flight #77. There was great confusion at that point about which aircraft was involved in the WTC crash.

[U] At 8:05 a.m. Central Time, AA #77 was locked out as directed by the SOCC. By 8:08 a.m. Central Time Marquis thought that AA #77 was the second plane to hit the WTC: "we had two aircraft which were NORDO (no radio contact) and there were two planes which had hit the WTC; we jumped to the conclusion that they were both ours." However, they were having a hard time figuring out how #77 had gotten to New York.

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[U] Parfitt reported that [redacted] was setting up the System Operations Command Center (SOCC) after the 7:45 a.m. Central Time conference call. Gerald Arpey and other senior management, including Craig Parfitt, arrived around 7:55 a.m. Central Time. As they arrived, Marquis and others were updating them on what they knew. At that point (around 8 a.m. Central Time), their primary source of information was CNN on the view screens in the SOCC. Additional SOCC personnel were assembling. They heard reports about the Pentagon being under attack, and about a Canadian airplane. At one time, CNN reported as many as 8 aircraft had gone "NORDO." Shortly after 8 a.m. Central Time Parfitt called his brother at United Airlines who reported that they also had some planes missing.

[U] Marquis recalled that AA instituted a ground stop for all its wide-bodied aircraft in the northeastern quadrant of the country prior to the FAA national ground stop. This was a "drastic" and unprecedented decision by AA, and was done despite the fact that the security people were not able to give them specific information on which to base the decision.

[U] At 8:15 a.m. Bertapelle reported that the entire AA board of directors was sitting in the SOCC room. He needed to get them out of the room so that the SOCC could function properly. Later that day, they and other senior American management had a "big meeting" to discuss events of the day. Communications from Herndon ATC Command Center were routed downstairs to the SOC. Vice President Robert Baker made calls to Monte Belger at the FAA.

[U] At 8:30 a.m. Central Time, it was confirmed that AA #11 had been one of the planes to crash into the WTC. At 8:42 a.m. Central Time, they got word that a plane had crashed into the Pentagon. The AA personnel were seeking to get someone to positively identify that aircraft. They were confused because of the multiple, near simultaneous events (including many other aircraft about which suspicions had arisen that morning because of alleged loss of contact, etc.). Furthermore, there was little information coming from the hijacked planes or from the Air Traffic Control (ATC) system for that matter. All of this vastly complicated the information flow within the airline on 9/11. It was impossible to isolate the incident, as called for in AA's pre-9/11 emergency procedures, when the attack was on the whole system.

[U] After the Pentagon crash, no one at the SOCC knew what to think at the time. Marquis indicated, "I just couldn't believe it was orchestrated" and still resisted thinking these were all coordinated hijackings. Bertapelle reported that it was not uncommon for pilots to not immediately respond to communications from Flight Dispatch, including ACARS messages, and this further slowed down their awareness that #11 and #77 had been hijacked. He indicated that there were, on average, half a dozen incidents a day of pilots not responding to controllers for minutes at a time because there was always "lots of chatter on the frequency."

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[U] Marquis initially thought the Pentagon crash was by a US Air Commuter aircraft, and it took about 45 minutes to positively identify the lost plane as AA #77. As this was being verified the Central United States was waking up and American still had 700 planes to fly.

### **9/11 Family Questions**

[U] The interviewees were not aware of any indications that the hijackers bought extra seats on the flights in order to make their takeover easier, or that the flights were less crowded than normal, but they promised to check it out and report back to the Commission.

[U] All of the interviewees reported that on 9/11, they were made aware that the hijackers had employed knives and mace. They received no indications that box cutters, guns or bombs had been used. They never got a real feel for how the hijackers got in the cockpit but they reported that the cockpit doors were "pretty flimsy."

### **Ground Stop and Other Immediate Responses to Hijackings**

[U] There was no discussion of notifying all the planes to beware of intrusions nor were any of the interviewees aware of any ATC desire that they contact their aircraft to that effect. However, AA personnel did make related ACARS transmissions on the morning on 9/11, but that was left up to the decision of the individual flight dispatchers. In addition to the ACARS transmissions to #11 and #77, numerous other such communications were sent to other AA planes that morning. One example was an 8:26 a.m. Central Time communication to another AA flight asking the cockpit to "call me when able." One AA dispatcher sent a message to "all Captains."

[U] Parfitt pointed out that once the decision was made to ground all the planes, that was the essential information which had to be conveyed to all aircraft. Aircraft within 30 minutes of their original destinations were told to continue. Flights within 30 minutes of takeoff were turned around to their takeoff point, and any planes in between these two points were told to land as soon as possible. Trans-Atlantic flights were sent back to Europe and Canada.

[U] FAA didn't want to panic the flight crews but the AA interviewees indicated they had no concern about panic and they wanted to tell all their pilots because they had a right to know. There was no hesitation to communicate clearly with their flights to get them on the ground. The interviewees felt that FAA and AA had "antithetical approaches" on the idea of inducing panic.

[SS] Under "Common Strategy 2," if a similar incident were to happen today, it is mandatory for all concerned to provide clear, undisguised communications to the flight crews about the situation.

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[U] Marquis stated that once the decision was made to bring the planes down, the priority was to get them all down, safely, not what to do with them once they landed. Bertapelle did not recall any discussions at the time as to what to do with respect to screening the passengers or the aircraft once they landed. Parfitt recalled that later on, there was much discussion on this point. Marquis indicated that on the day of 9/11, AA would not have known precisely what to screen for. The interviewees were aware that the Canadian government did require screening of the passengers who were grounded there.

[U] Parfitt was not aware, on 9/11 or since, of any credible information on other 9/11 plots, and the other interviewees agreed with his assessment. If there had been such a problem, it would have been routed through the SOC from the airport or Flight Dispatch, but none of them were ever aware of such information.

**AA Hijack Procedures and Security**

[U] Marquis indicated that AA had procedures for dispatchers and managers to utilize when they were notified about a hijacking but these were based on the traditional (non-suicide) model. They lacked procedures to adequately deal with this type of terrorist attack. Their recurrent security training did include "Common Strategy" elements, but not every year.

[SSI] The new "Common Strategy 2," which includes lessons learned from 9/11, is taught to all American employees and includes a section on terrorism.

[U] Pre-9/11 relevant threat information from FAA Information Circulars and Security Directives was passed on to dispatchers. Marquis didn't remember what happened to the documents themselves before 9-11. Now a hard copy is kept in a file on managers' desks

[U] AA did do security "table top exercises" from time to time, and these involved multiple departments from the airline, as well as outside entities. Marquis recalled one such exercise on a hijacking done with an airplane with full corporate participation as well as the FBI. The SOCC did do exercises, but had such low turnover that there was generally a good awareness of emergency procedures. Since 9/11, many of the practices used or developed by the SOCC then have been formalized.

[U] With respect to keys to the cockpit, the AA flight standards manual calls for flight crewmembers to guard their key carefully. However, one key did fit everything, from the refrigerator to the cockpit and in practice, it was never an issue; every flight attendant had two keys that opened everything.

[U] In terms of organization, at AA Peggy Sterling is Vice President of Safety, Security and Environmental Issues. She answers to the CEO but not to the Board of Directors. The senior Vice Presidents answer to the Board. Security Director Wansley answers to Sterling, not to the CEO. Wansley is responsible for passing on pertinent security information to the SOC and SOCC.

**Recommendations**

[U] American did do an after-action "lessons learned event." This included how to provide for better reaction in the SOCC to any such future incident, but was mostly related to the need to update the "Common Strategy" to deal with this new form of hijacking. The systems for Positive Target Information (PTI) and SOCC activation did not change.

- 1) [U] Parfitt believes there is a need for better and more security training on threat assessment. The SOCC is necessarily reactive, but better threat awareness could expedite and improve its reporting and decision-making in a crisis. (Neither Parfitt nor any of the other interviewees were aware of the 2000-2001 Pat McDonnell CD-ROM presentation for airlines and airports on the terrorist threat to civil aviation, though they assumed AA Security Director Wansley was aware of it. If he thought it was information they needed to have, he would have shared it with them.)
- 2) [U] Parfitt suggested that a coordinated industry effort by the airlines to share emergency information more rapidly and effectively would be useful. On 9/11, he was in touch with United but not Delta, for example. Marquis added that the same would apply to better information sharing among the airline security divisions (including for air rage incidents).
- 3) [U] Parfitt recommended that a "best security practices" meeting be convened among the airlines. He noted that such a practice does occur with respect to operational issues.

[U] With respect to communications with the federal authorities, on 9/11, AA personnel were not on the phone net with the FAA's Washington Operations Center, nor were they in continuous contact with the Herndon ATC Command Center. In both cases, the Air Transport Association was trying to "carry a lot of water" for all the airlines. In retrospect, the interviewees agreed that it would have been helpful for them to have had a more formal arrangement for reporting to and from the FAA and ATC. More specifically, if they had known sooner about United Flight #175, it might have affected their evaluation and decisions.

[U] ATC knew what was going on because of the intercepted communications from the cockpit. In the event that the AA SOC was aware that it was the first to know about an incident, the protocol would have been for the SOC Manager on Duty (Marquis) to have immediately autodialed to the Herndon manager on duty (Ben Sliney) with the information. The interviewees reported that AA had a hard time on 9/11 in getting in touch with Herndon. Precious minutes were lost in building the communications bridge.

[SSI] Marquis reported that there are still communications problems. He cited a hypothetical case of an unruly passenger who has to be flex cuffed while his flight is heading to Dallas/Ft. Worth. Marquis would receive 6 or 7 different phone calls about

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this incident because "everyone gets involved." Bertapelle reported that "There is absolutely no way of deescalating an incident." In the case just cited by Marquis, the flight would be chased by F-16s, the pilot would be delayed from pulling into the gate, people from TSA and elsewhere in the government would be contacting him with hearsay information while he has the straight story from the pilot. Thus stove-piping of information continues to be a real challenge.