

John Raidt

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To: John Raidt
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John ~

As you requested on the phone, here is my recollection as an audio witness of the United flight impacting of the Pentagon on Sept 11.

On the morning of September 11, 2001 I was standing outside of the Ritz Carlton Hotel in Pentagon City awaiting the arrival of a Boeing executive so we could depart for a 10:00 am appointment in the U.S. Capitol. At approximately 9:35 to 9:40 I heard an unusual increasing sound of jet engines. My initial instincts were that the noise was from a flight of military aircraft preparing to make a ceremonial fly-over at Arlington National Cemetery, even though I was aware of the two planes impacting the World Trade Center. However, almost immediately, I heard the engine noise increase to an even higher RPM than would normally be heard, even from a military fly-over. Most of the sound was probably being reflected from the shopping center directly across the street, but clearly the engines were in a high rpm operating mode. Within seconds I heard a thump, followed by an explosion. I, along with our two other colleagues, ran toward the Pentagon through the pedestrian tunnel under the highway. While running through the tunnel I heard a second explosion (later thought to be the explosion from the Pentagon fuel tank). Military personnel were running the opposite direction through the tunnel. Several said, "Turn around, they are bombing the Pentagon!". When I exited the pedestrian tunnel I was looking almost directly at the impact area at the Pentagon and the rising black smoke. Soon after assessing that there was little aid we might be able to offer we exited the area.

My interpretation of the engine sounds was based on my experience as a military aviator with over 4,000 flight hours in high performance aircraft. I also had worked for several years in Crystal City which is directly adjacent to the Pentagon City Ritz Carlton so I was very familiar with local flight paths and routine jet engine noise heard in the vicinity of the Pentagon.

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Legislative Affairs

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