

MEMORANDUM FOR THE RECORD

Event: Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) New York Air Route Center Interview with George Leonard, Acting Quality Assurance support manager.

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Type of event: Recorded Interview

Date: Tuesday, September 30, 2003

Special Access Issues: None

Prepared by: Geoffrey Brown and Miles Kara

Team Number: 8

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

Participants - Non-Commission: Alfred Johnson, FAA General Consul

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

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

Background

Leonard has been in his current position since the third week of January 2002; prior to that he was the Operational Supervisor in Area C. He has also served tours as a Quality Assurance Specialist and as an Air Traffic Controller (ATC) in Area B. He has been at ZNY since October 1987.

Events of 9-11

Leonard was the Operations Supervisor, Area C, on 9/11, but was not in the facility that day. He was attending an Operations Supervisor Course at Pocono PA. He teaches operational supervisors and Pocono is a central location in the Eastern Region for such training. He is also a certified accident investigator and has been certified to teach accident investigation since 9/11.

Events unfolded early in morning, they had just began class. A supervisor from a NY tower interrupted telling him what he could see ongoing. Class was suspended and they went to learn the news. Leonard called the Eastern Region to let them know there were 33 supervisors at Pocono. They were advised to remain where they were, but several made the personal decision to return to their duty locations. He personally came back to New York later that day. From his perspective supervisors all made decision to return to their facilities immediately. Everyone was on the road when the towers collapsed.

Other Points

After 9-11 he took the place of Marty Fournier (stricken with appendicitis) and his role was to put together the transcripts and compile a list of aircraft position reports from SATORI (FAA system to exploit and display raw radar and computer information) to plot on maps and get recreate routes for analysis. He did not get involved with specific

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handling of tapes and other mechanics of the process

He did not get involved with establishing situational awareness of which aircraft impacted which tower. He did not encounter any information on AA11 as a reborn target, southbound.

Leonard viewed CNN as it carried information on the two impacts at the World Trade Center and called the facility and spoke with Charlie Alfaro. Leonard could tell after second impact that it was a significant sized aircraft. He thought it was a B767. He knew that events could not be an aircraft or pilot mistake after the second impact.

Nine different radar sites support ZNY. The sites feed a host computer and the computer produces a mosaic display that it determines best meets the needs of the controller to maintain traffic separation.

Hijacking Scenarios and Training

He had never contemplated a scenario such as 9-11. All employees undergo annual refresher training internal to FAA that included a hijack scenario at least once per year. The Dynamic Simulation lab where scenarios are created was intended for controllers.? He had no recall of unusual scenarios; most training scenarios were standard hijackings.

Absent the overheard communications there appeared to be no direct indication from the AA11 sequence of events that there was a hijack. Loss of communications, including transponder, would lead a controller to believe there was a catastrophic mechanical malfunction. In a pre 9-11 world the controller would be alarmed about the actions of AA11, but not think hijack.

Post 9-11 hijacking training scenarios require loss of communications and/or loss of transponder to be brought immediately to supervisor attention and reported up the command line. The Pre-9-11 procedure, once aware of cockpit compromise, was for the controller to look for verification covertly from pilot to confirm, and tell super.

The Accident File

The ZNY accident file was put together by Marty Fournier and Kevin Delaney. The file itself is separate from the accident package that must be forwarded, and includes supporting documentation for the package.

Comments and Recommendations

Since 9-11, not just FAA but the aviation industry has learned to look scrupulously at people.

Need to continue to explore how aircraft could be used differently by terrorists.

Never would have thought military aircraft would be used for engagement order. But now people would expect nothing less.

Need to keep trying to make things safer with both FAA, the Airlines, DoT, and DoD.