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MEMR04016777

MEMORANDUM FOR THE RECORD

(b)

Event: North Eastern Air Defense Sector (NEADS) field site visit

Type of event: Initial Briefing

Date: Tuesday, October 28, 2003

Special Access Issues: Clearance check

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Team Number: 8

Location: Commander's Conference Room, Building 102

Participants - Non-Commission: MSgt Joe McCain, Captain Warnock, USAF JAG

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

On 9/11 MSgt Joe McCain was at the Mission Crew Commander Technician (MCC Tech) Consul 2 position.

McCain joined the Air Force (AF) at what is now WADS (Western Air Defense Sector) as a tracker in 1984. He spent two years there, and then was in Greenland. After Greenland he worked in Texas, and in 1990 was reassigned to NEADS as an ID Tech. He spent 7 years as an ID Tech before becoming a MCC Tech in about 1998. Prior to NEADS, May of 1984 to May of 1986, he was a radar "tracker", but has not been certified since.

An ID Tech's job is to take an aircraft that has a questionable identification and determine the exact identification of the aircraft through various means.

There is an Air Defense Identification Zone that surrounds the United States. At certain DefCons, they have what is called a "correlation line". It is not until an aircraft breaks this line that an ID Tech has two minutes at over 250 knots and five minutes at less than 250 knots to identify. If the aircraft is not assigned an ID after the given period of time, the aircraft is given an "unknown" status. At this point the MCC increases the readiness posture of the fighter interceptors to prepare for a possible scramble and intercept. The ID Tech has to continue to attempt to identify the aircraft.

ID Tech's are familiar with communication over identifying an aircraft with outside agencies. The ID Tech's are information gatherers, and speak to a range from military units (Navy, Coast Guard) to the FAA side (the nine centers). "9 times out of 10" if the ID Tech communicates with the FAA they speak with the MOS. ID Techs also speak with the towers and service stations to attempt to identify aircraft. They do not speak often with the airlines. ID Techs do match flight plans with aircraft identity.

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AMIS stands for Air Movement Identification Service. Their job is to process and distribute flight plans for over water (oceanic) routes. For identification of flights that are off the coast, the ID Techs usually call AMIS.

Prior to 9/11 the ID Techs had a hotline to ZNY AMIS.

The ID Techs speak often with the Air Force Search and Rescue missions. The AF S&R looks to the ID Techs for data reductions.

McCain worked a hijacked plane in the Lufthansa aircraft event. It was intercepted and followed by Canadian F18s, and F16s from Burlington escorted the flight at the US coast. NEADS designated the flight a "Special 15", and the flight continued to JFK Airport. McCain was an ID Tech at the time. In this circumstance, all the questions that the ID Tech team needed to answer were asked and answered. It was a "very easy scenario", since they exercised and drilled for this type of event on a weekly basis.

They would have a Fertile (Northeast generated) RICE (large scale – more than seven targets – exercise). The scenario would be varied from over land to over water. "Occasionally" in exercises aircrafts take off internally (from US over-land airspace). Often the aircraft would leave from Chicago, and instead of going where it was flight planned, would go to Toronto. In this drill, the fighters had plenty of time to intercept and practice the escort. McCain states to his knowledge it was never exercised that the target would stop squeaking its transponder. Multiple hijack scenarios were not addressed in the training.

According to McCain, the drug interdiction mission for NEADS added some responsibilities to certain position. The ID Tech speaks to Customs to see if they have a history on the flight. If there is no knowledge or history, Customs asks NEADS to put a "B" on the mark. For the most part it is radar flight followed; and the information of where a plane may land is transferred to Customs.

Q93 radar screens have the ability to run a multiple input war-time scenario. The whole exercise from a peace time ROE to a wartime ROE, including the fighting phase, runs for roughly two or three hours.

These exercises would usually have two elements, from two separate desks. This would then test the MCC's ability to have situational awareness.

McCain believes these exercises worked well.

Regarding the MCC Tech, McCain states the best description of the role is as a coordinator. They obtain information from various sources, and then distribute that information. The MCC Tech also receives orders from his superior and distributes those orders to his team. The MCC Tech keeps the MCC situational at an optimal operational level. As a general rule the MCC Tech takes input from the floor ID section, and the MCC takes input from Weapons and Surveillance.

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The MCC operates the main communication to the Fighter Operations and Weapons Director in the front of the floor. Though if the MCC is occupied, the MCC Tech will relay information to the FO or the Weapons Director, and then the MCC Tech will "back brief" the MCC.

The AST (Air Surveillance Tech), the SD (Senior Director – Weapons) and the SD Tech, and the ID consul all give information through feeds, both visual on the consul and through the headset, to the MCC and MCC Tech.

The MCC Tech also is responsible with coordinating the Op Rep (Operational Reports) through the NAS (NORAD Alert System) to the other NORAD/CONR entities.

McCain notes to Commission staff that he maintained a log for the day. It is CLASSIFIED SECRET since it contains information on the status of bases and increases of alert posture for NORAD Alert Fighter Aircraft. That log's time entries are all based off of his operational display. The 8:40 entry in his log is at the conclusion of the FAA notification conversation. He has no idea how much sooner that notification may have happened; it might have even been a few minutes. McCain notes the time entry at the time he writes down the entries.

McCain is not sure when the laptops to create the chat logs were put onto the Operational Floor and Battle Cab. He believes that SMSgt Sam Bianchi was also participating in the chat log creation and in the notations in his log.

On 9/11, McCain began his shift at 7:30AM and was briefed "on position". The Battle Cab was formed since there was a NORAD exercised planned to begin at 9:00AM. Sgt Dooley was one of the ID Techs that morning. Sgt Powell came from the Weapons position and informed them of the real world hijack. McCain could tell that Powell was serious from the "look in his eyes", and McCain realized he needed to get his team together immediately. He called on the PA for Alpha Flight Personnel (all personnel, those on break and on duty) as well as for then Major Nasypany to report to the floor. Major Ovens was training for the MCC position, and was also with McCain at the time.

Powell also noted to McCain that ZBW was "looking for some assets" (air defense fighters). McCain notes that he recalls attempting "desperately" to locate AA 11 with latitude longitude, altitude, direction, or heading. McCain notes to Commission staff that at that point in the morning, the busiest air traffic point in the day, and with the multiple "weather hits", the ID Techs needed some information to narrow their search. They eventually received information from the FAA that facilitated this. His role during this period was gathering as much information as he possibly could and relaying this information to the MCC and to the Battle Cab.

McCain states that he believes after reviewing the voice tapes that he may have been speaking with ZBW and spotted AA 11 moments before the impact. ZBW was giving the information to McCain that the aircraft was 15 N of JFK, and he responded that he found

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a target roughly 8 E NE of JFK. McCain further explains that by the time ZBW responded, the target was gone; presumably it was AA 11 that he saw, and when the target was lost that was the strike on the World Trade Center.

After the target faded, the next point that McCain remembers is the news arriving from the break room – “very unconfirmed reports” – that an aircraft hit the WTC. He believes that it was only roughly ten minutes of confusion between the impact and when both NEADS and the FAA were convinced it was AA 11 that struck the WTC.

At roughly 8:56AM, based on a transcript provided to Commission staff, McCain notes that some of the conversation was most likely his communication with Major Nasypany; though he states that he can not distinguish with confidence which one of them was speaking.

McCain states that he does not think anyone on the floor still believed AA 11 was airborne. He states that the situational awareness was on par with the data; and when the search data track eight to ten miles out disappears there is a limited amount of conclusions. He states that he personally did not believe that AA 11 was still airborne.

McCain notes to Commission staff that there was no official notification of the identity of the aircraft that struck the World Trade Center. McCain states that he believes he remembers an FAA sourced report that AA 11 was still airborne.

After that McCain remembers the “gut” feeling that in a hijack of an airplane that was headed to land at JFK, an inexperienced pilot may have “gotten too low” and crashed into the WTC. It was at the second strike on the WTC that he came to the realization that it was an attack. The information that the ID Techs received was much less thorough on AA 11 than the information they received regarding UAL 175. McCain states he never saw UAL 175. McCain notes that the data reduction will show that their radar picks it up; but that between the time when they hear of it and when it hits the WTC no one saw it on their scope. He is confident that he would have heard it was seen from the floor because of his role as an MCC Tech.

McCain notes to Commission staff that he has seen several briefings based on data reduction on where all the aircraft traveled. But these briefings were not until months later. He heard Colonel Marr’s 9/11 Briefing only “about” a month ago.

McCain notes that there were informal discussions on the events of 9/11; but that he does not remember a formal session. McCain notes that he did not speak to the public affairs office or a historian from 1st AF. He notes that there was someone at NEADS, from perhaps Hill AFB, to decipher the tapes and create a transcript. He has never seen an investigative product from 9/11, but he has reviewed his own transcript.

McCain notes to Commission staff that folders were put out on the Operations Floor for each position to note lessons learned from the day. McCain believes the Director of Operations Center, Colonel Sanderson at the time, may have collected those documents.

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He stated to Commission staff that this was probably an "in-house" lessons learned/best practices gathering of information. He does not recall any presentation or compilation of this information. He does note that he thinks the procedural changes came at least partially from these "lessons learned" notes.

Commission staff redirected the questioning back to the situational awareness on 9/11. McCain states that regardless of slight confusion over AA 11, he is confident that it was AA 11 that struck the tower based on the size of the impact hole.

McCain believes the information that it was UAL 175, the second hijack, which hit the WTC came from the Operations Desk.

McCain states that he recollects being informed of six total hijacks. The first two were AA 11 and UAL 175. One was AA 77. One was UAL 93. One was Delta 1989 that was a false indicator based on an inaccurate report of a bomb on board. Sometime prior to the UAL 93 crash there was a report that a hijacked flight went down in Kentucky. About a month later he decided that the report of a downed aircraft in Kentucky must have been confusion over the crash of UAL 93 in Shanksville, PA.

There is an entry at 9:42AM in the log provided to Commission staff that McCain identifies as Major Nasypany mentioning a need for fighters from Langley to be scrambled, and mentions that the fighters from Otis will be directed to "chase down" a still airborne AA 11. McCain notes that he is confident that it is Major Nasypany since he has no authority to scramble aircraft. McCain further notes that he does not know where the report that AA 11 was still airborne surfaced. He believes that the ID transcript, considering its conversations with the MOS at the FAA Centers, would be the best source for information on this. He also notes that the Weapons position speaks to controllers, so that could be another possible source of information on this topic.

McCain notes that after the report surfaced that AA 11 was still airborne "everyone" was looking on their scopes for something that would fit airline parameters at commercial airline flight levels in New York and Washington airspace that "were not squawking".

McCain does not remember seeing AA 77 or UAL 93 on his scope. He does recall tracking the progress of Delta 1989. McCain states that the Delta 1989 flight had a report of a bomb on board, but that there was no confirmed information that the flight had been hijacked.

He can not directly recall the timeline of the scrambled flights. He refers Commission staff to the MCC log. McCain can not facilitate the Commission staff with much more information regarding the scramble timing than that contained in the transcript.

McCain heard that the Pentagon was hit but this did not change the MCC Tech operation "too" much. There was confusion "obviously" stemming from this, but NEADS was still able to field flights. McCain noted that most of the units that offered assets were "air to

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mud" (armed for air to ground operations), but that there were few interceptor assets available (armed for air to air operations).

McCain notes that in the "weeks following" 9/11 there were a number of "Special" designated flights for various reasons that came to the attention of NEADS.

McCain notes that most of his conversations were on "STU Three". That is a secure phone that is not recorded.

AFIO indicates "Authorization for Intercept Operations." Under AFIO the fighters remain under US NEADS, or Air Force control.

The "Tech" position is an enlisted position.

QUIT 25 and 26 were in orbit in DC when UAL 93 went down, as far as McCain understands.

The base went to DefCon Three, and Major Nasypany relayed that the president authorized to intercept an aircraft and fire as needed. The ID section will certainly confirm the aircraft before a fighter pilot is told to take action. Authorization was delegated down from NORAD through CONR to NEADS.

Commission staff begins to review the audio file labeled DRM 1 DAT 2 Channel 3 MCC TK with McCain.

McCain notes his conversation occurring concurrent with the AA 11 impact at the 16-18:00 mark on the file.

The TDF is very accurate with height finding capability now in comparison with that capability on 9/11, which may have been off by "thousands of feet".

McCain does not have any direct knowledge on existing notes from the ID Tech positions on 9/11. His notes were on his plexiglass.

McCain notes that he is highly confident in his "crew", and is extremely supportive of the job they did on 9/11.

Through "20/20 hindsight", McCain would have liked the same technology on 9/11 that NEADS is operating with and developing today. He notes that their system on 9/11 was from 1984. He stated the personal opinion that "not a dime was spent on air defense" after the Cold War ended in 1989. He also noted that he was angered that prior to 9/11 NEADS transitioned from air defense to a smaller anti-narcotic role. He notes that "posse commitatus" may have been a factor in this.

McCain notes that the improvements of the last two years are "a great stepping stone" for future air defense. He notes the necessity of low level and one mile resolution on targets.

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He states that with continued improvement in equipment and training the unit will continue to "get better". He also notes deep respect for his superior officers on 9/11.

McCain further notes that there should have been more communication lines with the FAA on 9/11. He also notes that there should be more than one secure line from the MCC position. He notes that there were several calls on 9/11 asking to speak to the MCC on the STU 3 phone at once; that information was not transferred in a timely basis. He refers to the atmosphere on the operations floor on 9/11 as "controlled chaos". He noted that the floor was extremely busy, but that everyone was doing the best job they could within the limitations of the equipment. He notes that the 9/11 scenario was not practiced, and that the hijack regulation did not apply.

McCain states that there should always be a robust high alert status of fighters; he notes to Commission staff that it was not appropriate on 9/11.

McCain participated in some local news broadcasts. He had a public affairs officer, Colonel Blaney, standing in the room directing what he could or could not answer. He notes that the reporters were looking for information on "how much better" they are prepared today than on 9/11. He also notes that there was a woman from "perhaps southern California" who wrote a book five years ago about NEADS. She came back after 9/11. He believes her first name was "Leslie".

McCain notes that they have been briefed since on what they can and can not speak about. He receives information in his morning briefing from the intelligence section. McCain notes that prior to the Commission coming to NEADS he was not briefed on what information he could or could not discuss.

SECOND VISIT:
01/20/04

Review of log book: MCC TK

The 1440 GMT entry that was noted in the log book was made by Snr. MSgt. Bianchi, and McCain noted that often there is a time lag between the receipt of a call and the entry.

McCain noted that he did not personally initial an entry in the log book until roughly 1834 GMT on page 157.

McCain noted that Bianchi and MSgt. Mike Perry both made the majority of the notations in the log book.

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Staff Sgt Larry Thornton was in position as a tracker and McCain noted that more trackers were brought onto the floor to facilitate NEADS' efforts to find flights on 9/11. The ASD (air surveillance technician) was most likely Sgt. Richmond. McCain noted that it was standard for there to be only one tracker on duty at the floor, but that there was another tracker in the building, per SOP. McCain noted that there could have been additional staffers present because of the Vigilant Guardian exercise, due to the earlier filter of swing crew. McCain noted that exercises of the magnitude that was planned for 9/11 were practiced roughly twice a year. Weekly exercises are run at NEADS, but to a much lesser extent.

McCain reiterated that Col. Nasypany or above was responsible for directing the scramble of the Otis ANGB fighters.

McCain noted to Commission staff that he recalled receiving word from the FAA that AA 11 was not the aircraft that had hit the WTC, and that there were many radar operators searching for data on the flight.

From review of the logs, McCain noted that the Langley fighters were scrambled on AA 11 under the premise that AA 11 was airborne. The Langley fighters could intercept an aircraft with the protection of the Washington area in mind quicker than if the Otis fighters were directed to chase it south.

McCain noted that he recalled no information on AA77, and that the aircraft would gradually be picked up by the radar sight J50.

McCain noted that Delta Flight 1989 was located on the radar feed, and they designated the flight a "Special Fifteen" classification.

McCain noted that when NEADS "Forward Tels" information to NORAD, they receive symbology on their PCs and can follow the progress of a tracked flight from the data being uploaded from their center. A "Lateral Tel" is when an entity such as NEADS passes symbology to a co-entity like CONR/SEADS.

McCain noted that he has no independent recollection regarding UAL 93 before he heard talk on the floor about an airliner that had crashed. First the location of the craft was Kentucky, and then it was clarified to be Pennsylvania.

McCain noted that at the NEADS floor the MCC, MCC TK, ID TK, Weapons Section, AST, and the IST all have access to the chat logs, but that the MCC and the MCC TK make the bulk of the entries. McCain noted that he is not sure if all of those positions had access to the chat log entry system on 9/11.

McCain noted that in order to speak with AWC NEADS must first go through communication with CONR.

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After reviewing chat logs with McCain, Commission staff learned that Steve Ovens wrote into the Chat Log since he was being trained for position, but was qualified to input data into the log. There are numerous entries in the document related to AA 11 between 9:20AM and 9:40AM. [Check with Commission staff member John Azzarello for further clarification.] McCain noted that there is both protocol for particular necessary entries and a judgment call for the passing of information. McCain noted that the SOP was for the direction for information passed into the chat log to come from the MCC position.

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