

MF 04016808

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MEMORANDUM FOR THE RECORD

Event: Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) Boston Center Field Site Interview with Brazilino Martens, Certified Professional Controller

Type of event: Interview

Date: Monday, September 22, 2003

Special Access Issues: None

Prepared by: Geoffrey Brown

Team Number: 8

Location: FAA Boston Air Route Center, Nashua, New Hampshire

Participants - Non-Commission: John R. Donnelly, FAA Senior Attorney [(781) 238 7045]

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

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

Martens was working Athens Sector 38 on 9/11, and took the AA11 handoff from 46R, with information on AA11's status. It was NORDO, and not responding to the instructions from 46R to take a 20 degree right heading. Martens fully expected to hear from AA11 shortly, but became alarmed when AA11 dropped to primary. He started the procedure for tracking, and thought the flight had an electrical problem. He used other aircraft to check on AA11's frequency, and updated AA11's flight track to reflect its change in course. When AA11 started its sharp left turn, Martens hoped it was just getting back on course. Martens coordinated with other flights to account for AA11's behavior, and was highly concerned because of his memory of Paine Weber's Lear jet incident. Sector 46R called and informed Martens of the threatening communications from AA11's cockpit. AA11 got the handoff to Kingston, and continued southbound. The controllers had no altitude, and no information on AA11's probable course. Martens knew that AA11 should have been back on its scheduled course to head towards LAX far before its left turn.

Martens acknowledged that NORDO aircraft were extremely common prior to 9/11, and mostly when a plane is on the wrong transponder frequency the pilot would come back to the correct frequency within a few minutes. Martens noted that most major air carriers make sure their aircraft have two transponders, and so a plane that loses all transponder broadcast without pilot communication is a situation that warrants concern within approximately thirty seconds. Martens believed AA11 was experiencing serious mechanical and/or electrical failure.

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Martens explained that air traffic controllers only monitor transponders for aircraft at higher altitudes, and had to switch their computers to display primary targets as well in the case of AA11. Martens also explained that in usual circumstance when an ATC has to identify a primary target on screen but has communication with the pilot the ATC will instruct the pilot to perform a 30 degree turn to the right or left, and can then tag the primary by identifying that turn. Martens also explained that the controller will broadcast a message on the "guard" frequency that is maintained on a backup transponder frequency amongst every aircraft in a sector (?).

Shirley Kula was Martens Radar Associate position on 9/11.

Martens stated that the dynamic simulations he has been involved in do run non-routine situations, but the hijack related scenarios are relatively simple.

Martens stated that shortly after he was off the scope and became aware of the first WTC hit he concluded that it was AA11. He was not involved with UAL175 or with Delta 1989.

Martens was not involved with the military scramble.

Martens used latitude and longitude to identify AA11 to other sectors so those sectors could clear aircraft in AA11's possible paths.

Martens stated that training and preparation for the Air Traffic Control role on 9/11 was adequate, since once the flights were airborne, and notification on the hijacking had been by the ATCs to their supervisors it was mostly the controllers job to maintain separation from AA11, which they were able to do. Martens also noted that a hijacking could have entered the ATC mindset after the serious course deviation, but that more than likely in the pre-9/11 world the best analysis would state it was a serious electrical/mechanical malfunction.

Martens would like to see a streamline for communications between FAA and military as preparation for another hijacking, and informed Commission staff that an FAA controller cannot "post" a flight onto a military scope, but can give the military operator latitude and longitude as an initial step to identifying an aircraft of common interest. Martens believes FAA ATCs have efficient equipment to do their jobs, but would like to have better radar than the ones they currently use (which sweep every 12 seconds).