

MFRO4016770

**MEMORANDUM FOR THE RECORD**

(P)

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

Type of event: Interview with Lt. Jeremy Powell

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Special Access Issues: Clearance check

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Team Number: 8

Location: Commander's Conference Room, Building 102

Participants - Non-Commission: Lt. Jeremy Powell (United States Air Force - USAF),  
Fred Davies, Esq. (National Guard)

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

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Note: Please refer to the recorded interview for further details.

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**Background:**

Powell joined the Georgia 117<sup>th</sup> Air Control Squadron in June of 1981. He was a member of the 117<sup>th</sup> until September of 1995 when he transferred to NEADS. Powell was promoted to Second Lt. in June of 2002.

He started as a Senior Airmen Tracking Technician. His primary responsibility was for surveillance. Surveillance will initiate a "pending track" on an unfamiliar target headed towards the US coastline from over water. Powell has held multiple position qualifications since he began at NEADS.

**Training prior to September 11, 2001 (9/11):**

According to Powell, pre-9/11 training in respect to hijacked planes was geared towards NEADS' role as a response agency; it was trained for and a check list for what needed to be done was sequenced. There is an actual SD/SDT Checklist #6 that has a checklist of hijacking procedures. A different checklist exists for scrambling fighters from separate air force bases.

The first tool Powell would refer to in the case of a hijack would be the hijack checklist. The checklist is for both the Senior Director and the Technician. They coordinate the information they receive with the FAA (Federal Aviation Administration).

**Hijack & scramble checklists:**

Commission staff presented Powell with the aforementioned checklist, and Powell reviewed the checklist with Commission staff, as follows:

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The hijack checklist indicates that the procedure for a fighter scramble should be initiated in the case of a hijack. So Powell would refer to a scramble checklist. The heading and the altitude to give the scrambled fighters are determined from the Senior Director, who gets his order from the Mission Crew Commander (MCC). The heading the Senior Director decides on is usually the heading and the altitude based on the quickest intercept route. The NEADS technician makes the actual conference call to the base and the FAA that scrambles the actual fighters. Initials are taken as acknowledgements so it is known who is participating on that conference call. The "card" for the scramble is not memorialized or retained in any way. Powell does not know if the "card" for 9/11 was retained.

Powell has to read off the orders directly from the card. After the scramble checklist is completed the next step is to supervise, and make sure the technicians are doing everything that needs to be done. The TCAS (terminal avoidance collision mode) gets the "strangle mode" turned off. The "strangle mode" is what alerts an aircraft to avoid coming into a certain radius of space to another aircraft. NEADS has to ask the FAA to cut off that (Mode Three) from their control; whereas NEADS can do so (take off the TCAS) for their fighters. Powell noted that circumstance dictates when this procedure is necessary.

The fourth step indicated on the fighter scramble checklist is to confirm that all parties involved are informed of any updates. In this circumstance, Powell could be communicating with the FAA, the ID desk or the MCC on his side.

The fifth step is to make sure that a "Mandatory Transmission Statement at 30 NM (Nautical Miles)" is given from the WD (Weapons Desk) to the scramble pilots. This step is taken by the Weapons desk to remind the pilots that they are to communicate back to Weapons when they are within 30NM of the hijacked aircraft.

The sixth step is to relay to the trailing fighter to maintain co-speed and co-altitude during the intercept.

The seventh step is to report all information to the MCC.

The final step is to perform additional actions as directed from the MCC.

The checklists are completed as events unfold, in real time. Those checklists are erased.

**Command structure during a scramble:**

According to Powell, the Senior Director is mostly a "hands off" position, but in a scramble does initiate the steps to scramble an aircraft. After the order is giving the fighter itself is handled by the Weapons desk. Once the fighters are in the air it depends on who (the military or FAA) is controlling the fighters' airspace route (over Warning Zones or over the national airspace areas) as to whether NEADS is involved.

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The point at which the FAA assumes responsibility for a fighter changes depending on the circumstance and timing of the event. At times the altitude may be affected with what the FAA instructs regarding air traffic.

Powell commented that during a scramble HUNTRESS (NEADS) will normally not communicate with Giant Killer, which is a Navy asset that controls some of the warning areas. Giant Killer does give HUNTRESS "hand offs" – transferring of air space control on an aircraft – depending on what the situation is.

When the fighters turn off their Code 3 the commercial air lines can no longer pick them up on their radar. They do this to trail the aircraft in question covertly.

**Hijacking drills:**

According to Powell, some hijacking practice has involved scenarios in which the hijacked flight is incoming from overseas. One, in Powell's recollection, involved a flight coming out of Canada. Powell noted that mostly these exercises are done in simulation. There were various live exercises; but none that involved hijacks. Powell commented that such live exercises would be extremely difficult to run.

The Weapons Director and the Weapons Director Technician are the first response internally at NEADS to a hijack.

**9/11:**

On the morning of 9/11, immediately preceding the initial call indicating a hijack, NEADS had just finished a crew change. Shortly after Powell assumed his possession he received the first call of the day that indicated there was a "no shit hijack". Since calls from the FAA to NEADS usually are from the FAA military coordinator that is Powell's best guess for the identity of the speaker.

Powell does not believe Major Nasypany was on the floor at this time.

Powell communicated the order from the MCC to scramble the Otis fighters. After affecting the Otis scramble, Powell passed out the times on their action to the "slide" so all the indications are on a viewing board and accessible to the staff in the area.

NEADS continually got knowledge from other flights in the air at the time through the FAA; and Powell, as well as the ID Section personnel (Dooley, Roundtree and Watson) kept the Battle Cab informed of the constant "Z points" that were pieced together to form a more complete picture of the day.

Powell stated that at roughly 9:09AM the World Trade Center (WTC) was hit for the second time and NEADS started to receive various incoming calls. [Note:

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Commission staff knows that United Airlines Flight 175 struck the WTC south tower at approximately 9:02 AM]

One of Powell's lines is used specifically for NEADS scrambles. This was used on 9/11 for Langley, which launched three fighters. Powell did not provide target data to the Langley (LFI) fighters since there was no target to give data on, and with the Otis fighters did not give a target bearing since they only knew to head the fighters towards New York City. Regarding the LFI fighters, Powell stated that the LFI fighters were headed to "a city", not a target. Powell noted that shortly after the scramble order was given the General Aviation flights were grounded.

Powell commented that after the scrambles of Langley AFB and Otis AFB air defense assets NEADS addressed the tracking of the AA 77 (American Airlines Flight 77) and UAL 93. Powell believes he heard of the Pennsylvania crash after the LFI scramble.

Powell called the air defense bases to the west to assess their air defense capability (armament, time to scramble, etc.). He asked Selfridge in a recorded conversation to vector the aircraft flying training exercises in the Pike Gauntlet airspace towards Pennsylvania. He was also speaking to Toledo AFB attempting to facilitate a fighter scramble. Powell issued an order to recall everyone who had just come off missions since there was a need to fully staff air defense operations.

Powell was not involved in SCATANA operations.

NEADS began setting up air space caps over all the major cities in the United States, and thus Powell was involved in the deployment of the SEADS (Southeast Air Defense Sector), CONR (Continental United States American Aerospace Defense Command Region) and WADS (Western Air Defense Sector) capabilities to cover these responsibilities. In this process, the non-scramble bases were asked to load their fighters and send them to certain areas. Powell authenticated these orders. On some, like Selfridge AFB, he initiated the move to send the airborne fighters due east. NEADS knew that the Pennsylvania aircraft was a hijack, thus he moved to position assets in that area.

Powell recalls that Major Fox was receiving orders from the Battle Cab, and relayed those orders to Powell. This command structure continued as the air space caps began to form over different cities. Powell was primarily responsible for coordinating which assets would be responsible for which caps.

According to an FAA transcript, at 8:52AM Collin Scoggins – ZBW MOS (Boston Air Route Center Military Operations Supervisor) – was called by Powell. Powell made the call to inform ZBW that they would control the Otis AFB scrambled flight. Powell explained to Commission staff that he made this call since anything over land is controlled by an FAA controller. The pilots have to confirm the advisory from NEADS control with the FAA ATC. The F-15 fighters have two radios and the pilots

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confirm with FAA that their advisory orders that vector towards the appropriate targets are through cleared airspace.

The center for the "Zoom 64" radar scope is JFK. It was this scope that was being employed to attempt to find AA 11. Powell does not think NEADS could have made a positive identification on AA 11. They had their surveillance and ID sections attempting to locate the airplane. Powell explains visually the way a radar tracks "Z" points, primary targets that could be weather dots, and the fact that the "paints" (radar indications of an object) the scope brings up are far from definite when dealing with a primary.

Powell explained to Commission staff that at the Weapons Desk he did not have course information on AA 11; that information would be from the ID Desk side. If a plane is squawking Mode Three and leaves from United States airspace it is immediately assumed to be a "friendly" aircraft. Thus the change in transponder codes for UAL 175 (United Airlines Flight 175) would not trigger a reaction at NEADS.

Powell specifically remembers watching the AA 77 track into the Pentagon. Once it went below the radar coverage in that area the track fell off the scope. Powell believes that at that point they did not know for sure what AA 77 was going to do, and does not know why the LFI fighters would have been scrambled.

There is a parallel line of communication on the notification of scrambling fighters that in the case of AA 11 included on one side the military set of notification and on the civilian side would be the responsibility of either New York Air Route Control Center (ZNY) or Boston Air Route Control Center (ZBW). On 9/11 the Weapons Director Technician (Sgt. Gardner, Lt. Gardner now) made these calls. Regarding LFI, a parallel call was made to Washington Center. Powell "imagines" that as soon as the scramble was ordered, the WD Tech needed to negotiate for airspace, thus needed to immediately make parallel calls in order to coordinate with the FAA centers.

**Post 9/11:**

Powell communicates now with Otis Tower, Cape Center, Cape TRACON, and Giant Killer to coordinate air defense in the post 9/11 environment. It is those personnel that are physically responsible for "hitting the line" for there to be a response in their centers. The number for those centers is in the phone at a relatively easy to use intelligence checklist. There is a conference line Powell has access to that is accessible by all FAA entities. For command purposes Powell transmits an indication of who is on the phone if that line is in use.

In terms of how Powell's position was affected in the post 9/11 environment, he noted that the checklist may have improved. He noted as well that the phone numbers to different agencies and military representatives are more accessible. The checklists were changed after 9/11, but they have been updated based upon the recommendations and approved standards from NEADS personnel. According to Powell, there have been multiple revisions in these steps since 9/11.

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Powell noted that there have not been after action dedicated meetings or interviews, besides newspapers and magazines, post 9/11 – but that a good amount of the information on the day, and what might have been more efficient, has been translated into practical steps “just because it has been talked about”.

Powell is supportive of the new communications systems that have been implemented, as well as the steps that are being taken to better prepare NEADS for future events. Powell noted that the training prior to 9/11 was focused on a mission that mostly monitored that airspace out from the continental United States; he also noted that the training for this purpose was outstanding. He stated that there are now new procedures with the FAA to coordinate the monitoring of internal airspace. These procedures include new FAA sectors; and new procedures over the operation of the airspace caps.

Some of these inward looking methods are used for drug interdictions. Powell noted that these types of operations are in the majority used on non-squawking aircrafts. The fighter pilots receive information to sanitize particular areas, and the fighters narrow down on the aircraft through the process of elimination when sanitizing the area.

Powell does not have an understanding of the FAA radar capability. He has an idea of the set up of their operations since his father was a FAA ATC; but he is not aware of what they can “see” in airspace in particular. Powell noted to Commission staff that he would have liked to have seen the FAA transcripts to compare to his experience, and piece the story together from their point of view.

**Other:**

A “Z” label is a stationary symbol that indicates a last known position for an aircraft; an “S” label indicates a “Special Track”. A special track just indicates a target that is under surveillance in particular.

Powell tells Commission staff that “BRaA” stands for Bearing Range and Altitude, and may be asked for by the FAA to facilitate their clearing of airspace for a flight.

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