

*Draft**(R)*

## MEMORANDUM FOR THE RECORD

Event: Richard Byard, Area 3 Air Traffic Controller

Type of event: Interview

Date: Wednesday, September 24, 2003

Special Access Issues: none

Prepared by: Cate Taylor

Team Number: 8

Location: Indianapolis Air Traffic Control Center

Participants - Non-Commission: Richard Byard, Area 3 Air Traffic Controller; Eileen

Participants - Commission: John Farmer, Dana Hyde, Cate Taylor

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**Background:**

Richard Byard has been an Air Traffic Controller at the Indianapolis Air Traffic Control Center for 17 years. Prior to 9/11, Byard had been enrolled in the Controller in Charge program and was the Controller in Charge on 9/11. He had participated in annual review of training for hijack situations, conducted in a training simulator. In these training exercises, Byard was never confronted with a suicide hijacker.

**Experience on 9/11:**

Byard arrived at 5:30am for his 6:00am-2:00pm shift and began working as the Controller in Charge for Area 3. From hearing that there was a problem with AA77 from Chuck Thomas, Byard went to look at the scope where he saw the coast track of AA77. He saw that the aircraft had made a slight turn to the left before it lost communication and told Thomas to hit the all primary button and did not see anything that could have been AA77. He thought this was very unusual. Byard was looking for AA77 in a 20 mile arch to the west.

Byard then told the person on the d-side position, Anthony Schifano to call American Airlines to alert the company of the problem. This is the time when Linda Povinelli came to Area 3 and called the maintenance hub. A few minutes later, he gave the order to call back American Airlines since there had been communication with AA77.

Byard also gave the order to call approach control in the Lexington, Huntington, and Cincinnati sectors to alert them of a potential problem. The primary was always kept on in the Huntington sector. Byard was not aware of any report of a crash in the area and had no involvement in calling the search and rescue. At no point did Byard have access to the television for news.

## COMMISSION SENSITIVE

He recalls that Chuck Thomas was focused on getting all flights grounded and Linda Povinelli did not instruct the controllers to keep the all primary on. Byard was in position to ground a few flights.

By the time the Pentagon was hit, Byard and others at the Center were suspicious that it was AA77.

Looking back, Byard doesn't think that putting together the events of the morning of 9/11 was too difficult and someone should have recognized what was happening.

### **Blank spot:**

About 1-2 weeks after 9/11, Byard attended a briefing given by Dave Boone and learned that there was a blank spot in the Bedford radar site, a part of Area 3. Byard learned that there was a radar site that could have tracked AA77 the whole time on the morning of 9/11 but this site was blocked from the Air Traffic Controllers' computers.

Upon hearing about the blank spot, Byard was angry that he was not informed of this earlier. He learned that few knew about the blank spot. The airways facility makes the assignments as to which data goes to the ATC computers. Byard suggested that someone at the e-desk should have access to all radar data, including data received from the blank spot.

Byard does not recall if Boone presented the reappearance of AA77 in the briefing.

### **NORAD:**

If he were in this situation again, Byard would not deal with NORAD. He would follow procedures that may lead to someone at the e-desk contacting NORAD.

### **Changes in job since 9/11:**

When an aircraft goes NORDDO, air traffic controllers take the situation much more seriously. There was a military presence at the Indi center after 9/11 for a short time, but the military still has access to the data at the center.