

MEMORANDUM FOR THE RECORD

Event: Darrel Smith

Type: Interview

Date: July 13, 2004

Prepared by: Lisa Sullivan

Special Access Issues:

Team: 8

Participants (non-Commission): Christine Beyer, Office of TSA General Counsel

Participants (Commission) Lisa Sullivan and Miles Kara

Location: 9-11 Commission office at GSA building

Background

Prior to joining the FAA, Darrel Smith was a air defense artillery officer and a Middle East foreign area officer in the U.S. Army. He retired in 1996 as a Major. He joined the FAA in the as an intelligence officer in the ACI Watch on the 3rd floor of the FAA Headquarters. He reported to Pat Durgin, who reported to Claudio Manno, who reported to Mike Canavan (ACS-1 on 9/11).

Duties

He was a shift officer in the FAA's 24/7 Intelligence Watch. The facility was a sensitive compartmentalized information facility. During the day shift, two duty officers manned the SCIF; during the night shift one person was on duty. It was a very small facility.

(There was another 24/7 facility within the FAA called the Washington Operations Center. It did not have an intelligence mission; it coordinated between the various FAA field facilities and monitored system operations.)

The FAA SCIF was tied to the intelligence community in several ways:

- Intel link
- NSA classified system (However, FAA intelligence could not "search the NSA database; they had to request more information in such cases from NSA).
- Autoden
- NOIWAN circuit (National Officers Intelligence Warning Network)
- Classified television (DOD produced)

To the best of his knowledge, no lines in the 3rd floor SCIF were recorded.

Outside of the intelligence community, intelligence officers seldom talked to representatives at the ROCs (Regional Operations Centers) and “never” talked to personnel at the ATCSCC in Herndon, VA.

Smith said that DOT security (S-60) viewed the FAA security division, including intelligence, as a subordinate group. Sometimes S-60 chastised FAA intelligence for not passing more threat information to them. When information was conveyed to the FAA intelligence about other modes of transportation, they would pass it along to S-60, whose primary role was to inform the Transportation Secretary Smith said part of his duty as an intelligence officer was to field calls that came into the Watch that were operational in nature. The example he used of such a call was from outside the intelligence community; such as a report from Dallas Fort Worth that someone was in a jump seat on a flight that did not have the proper documentation to do so; or was not a pilot for that matter. Upon receiving such information, Smith would pass it on to the 10th floor.

ACC Activation

The authorization to activate the aviation crisis center (ACC) came from ACO-1, Lee Longmire. People were assigned positions in the ACC in advance. Those people knew what their responsibilities were in the event of a crisis.

He did not know who the hijack coordinator would have been on 9/11; or whether he was aware that designation existed at that time.

He remembers periodic training with ACI participation in standing up the crisis center. In the four years he was in the ACI Watch, he recalls 2-3 training sessions. Next to the ACC was a “mini-SCIF” manned by 1-2 ACI intelligence officers in support of the crisis center. The mini-SCIF and the ACI Watch on the 3rd floor would pass information back and forth.

Connectivity to the Military

Smith thought a classified “dedicated telephone line” existed between FAA, NORAD, SEADS, NEADS monitored by the NMCC and JSOC. He did not offer more information on the existence, use, or whereabouts of this line.

When incidents arose that warranted military notification, Smith said they “reached out” to their counterparts at the NIMJIC, DDI, the DDO at the NMCC; “as much as we could, we tried to give them a heads up.”

Summer of Threat '01

Smith described it as a “stream of nonspecific reporting” in late spring/early summer. There was a sense something was going to happen but he didn’t know what. He thought it would be another attack on an embassy abroad, because of events in the recent years. He described his job as processing “intelligence for protection of U.S. Civil Aviation primarily domestically but also internationally.” There was nothing about hijacking that summer. The thought process at the time was, “why would someone choose hijacking, and what would they want to accomplish?”

He said it was a problem that few agencies, even those in the intelligence and law enforcement communities, knew that FAA had a robust intelligence division staffed by very experienced individuals. The division was a result of the Pan Am 103 investigation.

“Planes as weapons” was a scenario that was discussed among analyst in brainstorming sessions. It was not discounted entirely but it was “not #1” on their list of potential threats.

Hijackings involved hostage-taking and bargaining; that was the pattern for the 15-20 years prior to 9/11. The threat of a hijacking occurring domestically was thought to be low, because hijackers would have few destinations to take the plane.

On 9/11

He was scheduled for a 10 hour shift that day; 7 AM – 5 PM. He and Bart Merkley were the intelligence duty officers. Their functions were “interchangeable.” On a normal day they prepared a written work product called the Daily intelligence summary that was disseminated to the ACI/ACS senior people. A Secret version was prepared for the 10th floor. Anything higher than that was hand delivered to the deputy Administrator.

As the events of the day unfolded, Smith prefaced that “all times were approximate,” because they kept one running log and inputted data as they became aware of it.

At about 8:30 AM, he got a phone call either through the Washington Operations Center or from the New England Regional Operations Center. The person on the other end said, “I think we have a hijacking.” At first Smith was skeptical of the report. He asked him why he thought so. The person from NE Region described what he thought was the pilot keying the microphone in the cockpit and that he overheard unusual conversation, possibly a Middle Eastern voice making threats. Smith seems to think he could here the transmissions in the background as he talked to the person from NE region.

He was told the plane was AAL 11 that departed Boston and was heading to Los Angeles. He was told it had deviated from its flight path and was heading south.

This information was what alarmed Smith most because such a deviation is like “changing directions of I 95 North and heading South.” It jeopardized the other flights in the surrounding air space.

COMMISSION SENSITIVE

Upon learning this information, the first thing Smith did was tell Angela Stubblefield, a new hire, to go get Claudio Manno and Pat Durgin who he knew to be in a morning meeting. Stubblefield came back and said she had not interrupted them. Smith got up and went to their office, interrupted the meeting, and said "I think we have a hijacking in progress."

Within an hour, an hour and a half the ACC was set up. He stayed downstairs in the SCIF with Merkley. Stubblefield and someone else manned the mini-SCIF upstairs.

He thought many factors inhibited an efficient response from FAA. One of them was the separation of the Washington Operations Center and the ACI Watch facility on different floors. Another reason was the amount of time it took to establish the ACC. In the interim, the ACI Watch was flooded by calls from other agencies and people in the intelligence community looking for information as the events unfolded. These people had the phone number into the Watch. The number to the ACC was not known. It was the job of the ACC to reach out and make contact with these agencies in order to affect a crisis center. As a result of fielding calls that should have been directed to the ACC, the Watch officers could not do their jobs effectively and situational awareness was not gained.

Smith thought it was possible he talked to someone from the NE Region prior to the recorded call between Jesse McKie in Commission possession. If so, it was within a few minutes.

Telephone Communications

The ACI Watch monitored one of the telephone nets established by the WOC that day; either the tactical net or the primary net. He thought it was the primary net.

He recalled that Merkley answered a NOIWAN call at approximately 9:00 AM. The call lasted longer than normal NOIWAN calls, which are usually to bring specific items to people's attention, etc. Smith does not remember any useful or significant information coming as a result of the NOIWAN call. Smith was confident the WOC also had a NOIWAN phone at TS-SCI level. Miles does not think that is true.

After Action

HE does not recall any efforts by Darlene Freeman or Dave Canoles to conduct an after action report.

Lisa Sullivan

From: Miles Kara
Sent: Tuesday, July 13, 2004 12:17 PM
To: Lisa Sullivan; Dana Hyde; Geoff Brown; John Azzarello; John Farmer; Kevin Shaeffer
Subject: Darrell Smith interview

Done deal. Lisa will type up MFR. Recording will be classified, at Smith's specific prompting.

He never went to the 10th floor. He is not certain there was a preceding call from Region before he is patched in by Jessie McKie, but thought there was. If so, it was within a couple of minutes.

He had a specific recommendation which lends credence to there being a preceding call. He said that the separation of the 3d floor watch center from the WOC proper always caused start up problems for the ACC, specifically for people who needed to reach the ACC. The situation is that no one knows the ACC numbers to call and when to call them. As a result calls that need to go to the ACC come in to the ACI watch on the 3d floor which must then forward either the call or the information to the 10th floor. Based on that, it is possible that someone in the ANE called the ACI watch before they called Jessie.

He said that the daily intel summaries were prepared primarily for ACI/ACS senior people. A summary was prepared for the 10th floor (SECRET level) which he recalled went to the WOC. If SCI information needed to be passed to the 10th floor it was hand carried. This supports our understanding that Shirley Miller was in the loop on the SECRET stuff and also supports Garvey's contention that SCI info of interest came to her or Monte.

He was not on the NOIWON; Merkley was. He recalled the call was one extended call. He insisted there was a NOIWON phone in the WOC, which is not possible since the WOC is not a SCIF.

Lisa may have more.

Miles

7/13/2004