



**MEMORANDUM FOR THE RECORD**

Event: Kim Wernica, Operations Manager at Cleveland ARTCC on 9-11.

Type of event: Interview

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Special Access Issues: None

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Team Number: 8

Location: Cleveland Air Traffic Control Center

Participants - Non-Commission: Kim Wernica, and Michael McKinley, FAA attorney

Participants - Commission: John Farmer, Dana Hyde, and Lisa Sullivan

Kim Wernica began her career as a controller in 1984 at Fort Worth Center. In 1990, she moved to Cleveland Center where she was a Supervisor. In 1998, she was made Quality Assurance manager. Then she became the Operations Manager for area 4, then she was Operations Manager for 4 and 1, and now, she is just a Supervisor.

On September 10, 2001, Wernica thought that in the event of a hijacking the controller handling the plane was to tell the supervisor of the area who in turn told the manager. Then the manager would call the regional operations center. She does not know what NORAD is; so she probably would have called the Command Center, too.

The management manual, known as 7210.3, would have provided her with directions. She knew of a military manual but she was not familiar with it before 9-11. "Now the military is part of our world," she said.

On 9-11, Ed Wobers had the watch desk. She got to the Center at 8:30 that morning. Wobers was doing the stand up briefing so she took over the watch desk. Shelly (another controller) said she had received a call wanting to know who was working AA 11. A couple of minutes later, Shelly said that Command Center had called to say the flight had hit the World Trade Center. Initially, she thought the pilot must have had a heart attack or something. Wobers went to the cafeteria to watch it on TV while she manned the desk. She said the controllers (mostly areas 5 and 7 handle traffic inbound to New York) went ahead and held all planes to the New York area.

When they received word of the second plane, Kim thought, "On my god." She ran down the aisle to make sure Area 5 and 7 knew about the situation, to make sure they were in fact holding the planes, and to get their alternate destinations. She said alternate destinations are predetermined.

The Command Center called the Traffic Management Center at Cleveland and said that a Delta flight fits the profile of the other flights. Rick Reid said he'd call Delta to get information to the pilot of the plane. She made the controller aware that Delta 1989

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might be a hijacked flight. The controller handed the flight off to John Werth in Lorain Sector. Soon after, Werth reported screaming on the frequency. She ran up to the TMU and they patched into the frequency so everyone could hear.

Wernica said she never once thought the source of the screaming came from Delta 1989. She knew it was another problem. It was her decision to patch the frequency for Lorain into the TMU. This enabled everyone assembled there, including Craig Pass and Gary Kettel, to hear the bomb statement. She ran down to area 6 to make sure Mark Barnik, Werth's supervisor, heard the bomb statement. Barnik told her they had heard it, and that UA 93 was the only flight in his section that was not responding to calls from Werth. She thought the terrorist must have meant to broadcast his message to the cabin, and inadvertently broadcast over the frequency with all the air traffic on it. Other pilots in the section heard it as well and confirmed that on the frequency.

What was odd about this particular hijack incident (in Wernica's opinion) is that pilots always say, "We have a problem," over the frequency if there is anything unusual to report. For the pilot not to have said anything; for him not to have been able to change the transponder to indicate a hijacking; that is what really floored the staff at the ARTCC. When asked to pinpoint the sequence of events and times from that morning, Wernica said shared the following information:

9:29 John Werth knew a plane in his section was hijacked.

9:31 ARTCC heard the bomb statement over the frequency.

Delta 1989 checked in after that, as well as all of the other planes in the sector.

Therefore, Werth determined it was UA 93. Once UA 93 was a known hijack, Werth anticipated that the hijackers would soon turn off the transponder.

At one point, Greg Dukeman received a call (he was in the position of Military Operations in the TMU that day) and handed it off to her. Wernica remembers the call was from a female. She told her Delta 1989 was a confirmed hijack. The pilot of that plane, who was forced to land, elected Cleveland Airport. (She confirmed that this was the only call from Huntress that day.) With this information, she was "running back and forth" informing all of the controllers and managers at this time. Cleveland Approach "didn't want anything to do with the airplane," she said. "It was so scary."

Soon after that, someone told her, "Area 6 has information for you." Bill Keaton told her that smoke was seen on the ground in that area, and it was believed to be UA 93.

Wernica asked for confirmation that it went down. Stacey, another controller, said that UA 93 went into the ground. At this point, Wernica told Commission staff, "No one knew what it would feel like to lose a plane like that."

When asked about the process of bringing all the planes down, Wernica said "Pittsburgh took every plane it could- they put them in parking lots and fields."

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Side note: She does not remember at what time she learned the Pentagon was hit. At some point, she received a message to land all planes because "a state of national emergency" had been declared. There were no code words used to convey the message; DOD did not know what it could divulge to the air traffic controller community.

When asked if she knew whether or not fighters were scrambled that morning in response to the hijackings, she said she is not sure if it actually happened. She remembers talk of it. In here words, "Everyone that needed to know about the hijackings was finding out about it really fast."

The initial call to Delta that morning was made by Rick Kettel. Thought broadcasting news that a Delta flight was a potentially confirmed hijack was not the best way to communicate that information. "Once Rich sat down on the phone, he never left" Wernica said. It was not her impression that Rick was "calling all the shots that day."

She also mentioned the incident between the Center and Ashcroft's plane that was trying to get back to Washington DC later that day.

If it happened again today, Wernica does not think there is anything she or the Center would do differently to prevent the same or worse outcome. "Nothing went wrong (from the controller's perspective); It was over in minutes," she said. She believes that things were prevented that day because the planes were brought down so quickly. If anything, she would like to see more defined roles laid out to respond to a crisis of this magnitude; something to tell her: "this is what we want you to do."

Her biggest gripe in the position at the Watch Desk that day was that she was supposedly in charge of all the people working, but she did not have a "ready-reference" useful in a "real time emergency" such as that. Instead, the region "bogged her down" with long manuals and instructions. She needed a checklist of 10-15 things she could do fast: "notify whomever, check in with this person.." that sort of thing.

She did not know what sort of communication existed between FAA and NORAD prior to 9-11. She had never heard of NEADS. An example she offered of normal communications with NORAD was: "when a communist aircraft flies through the airspace, the Center has to call Huntress to give the coordinates."

Wernica said, "You're a controller one day, a supervisor, an operations manager the next. Training for these different positions is nonexistent." As Operations Manager, she received no additional training specific to a crisis situation.

A big change since 9-11 is the introduction of the 24-hour a day DEN (Domestic Emergency Network). Military personnel was stationed at the Center for awhile – reservists – She thought a military person should man the military desk at the Center. This may help alleviate any tension that might exist between the FAA and the military.

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She added that at one point, Werth (during the crisis) thought he should broadcast over the frequency a message to pilots to secure their cockpit doors. Wernica thought this was completely unprecedented; "no one would have done this."

Certainly, a checklist would be invaluable to controllers in management / supervisory positions. Otherwise, Wernica finished, "I'm not sure of where we are or how much we learned from this experience."