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MEMORANDUM FOR THE RECORD

Event: Interviews at Otis Air Force Base (Otis AFB)

Type of event: Interview with F-15 Fighter Pilot Major Daniel S. Nash

Date: October 14, 2003

Special Access Issues: None

Prepared by: Geoffrey Brown

Team Number: 8

Location: 102nd Fighter Wing, Otis Air National Guard Base, Massachusetts Air National Guard

Participants - Non-Commission: Andrew Huddleston (Dep Ch, Plans, Integration & Transformation Div, AF/XOHP, 703 696-0024, Fax: 703 588-0636)

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

Background:

Prior to his current duty, between 1996 and 2000, Nash was stationed in England.

Nash is a member of the 102nd Fighter Wing, which is stationed at Otis AFB, and is part of the rotation of pilots that staff the NORAD air defense mission for the base. Nash was the wing aircraft of the 1st Alert Mission to scramble on September 11, 2001 (9/11). This fighter scramble consisted of the two F-15 Air Defense fighters from Otis AFB, designated PANTA. He was not scheduled to be on alert during that 24 hour period, but was covering the position so the pilot who was scheduled could fly a training mission.

According to Nash, there were six alert fighters on 9/11 to cover the east coast.

PANTA scramble on 9/11:

Nash explained to Commission staff that on 9/11 he was in his office when Lt. Col. Timothy Duffy, the other alert pilot, told him of the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) call from Boston Air Route Traffic Center (ZBW) to the Otis AFB Tower that relayed the information that there was a possible ongoing hijack. The tower directed the call to the Operations Desk, which is where Duffy heard of it, and then that call was redirected to Tech. Sgt. Michael Kelly, who was in the Command Post of Otis AFB.

Both Nash and Duffy immediately dressed in the suit designed for fighter pilots, and as they headed to the truck that transports them to the alert barn (which houses the alert ready F-15s) the Klaxon alarmed "Battle Stations". Nash noted that at that point the only

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information the pilots were aware of was that they were responding to a possible hijacking.

Nash noted that he was assigned to the "number one" (lead) position, but since Duffy had experience on the Luftanhanza hijack, Nash took the wing (second) position.

Nash estimated for Commission staff that once he and Duffy reached the air alert barn it took approximately three minutes to launch.

NEADS gave PANTA an altitude of Flight Level 290 (FL 290, or 29,000 feet) and a heading (possibly "265") towards New York City. NEADS relayed this message through the Otis AFB Command Post. The pilots authenticated the order with their alert packs. According to Nash, those were all the instructions given. Nash noted to Commission staff that the PANTA flight was never given a direct coordinate for AA11, and was just given a heading. He noted that generally fighter pilots would receive the coordinates - they are given an intercept heading and the fighters find a target using their own radar.

According to Nash, PANTA maintained supersonic speed over Long Island, and along the rest of their course. They heard that an airliner had hit the World Trade Center (WTC), and after that, according to Nash, "it sounded from NEADS as if they didn't know what to do with us".

There was a tanker in Warning Area 105, also known as Whiskey 105 (W105), and Nash suggested they use it for refueling. According to Nash, PANTA was not in W105 for more than five minutes when NORAD took control of the New York City airspace and ordered the PANTA flight to fly the air space cap. Duffy and Nash took turns refueling, and maintained the cap. Generally on a cap they would stay together in pairs, but they split so that the entire air space could be covered. Another pair of fighters arrived at the cap at approximately 1100EDT.

Nash noted that FAA controllers cleared the air space for the PANTA flight's route to Manhattan. Nash does not remember at which point during the morning of 9/11 he heard of the first crash at the WTC. He did remember that the FAA controller he communicated with during flight told him of the second crash; Nash commented that his was strange to hear at the time since he had not been told of the first. Nash did not hear the call sign UAL 175 until after he landed. He noted that "at some point" either the FAA controller or the NEADS controller told the PANTA flight of the crash at the Pentagon.

While flying the New York City air space cap PANTA flight mostly identified police helicopters, and emergency response helicopters. Nash remembered that there were two Coast Guard helicopters from New Jersey in the air as well. New York TRACON was relaying intercepts to suspicious aircraft to the fighters through the use of their low altitude feed radar. Nash believes this was coordinated through HUNTRESS.

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Nash does not remember how he and Duffy divided their transponder codes on 9/11 since it is a second hand process to them.

Reason for robust armament:

Nash noted to Commission staff that the USSR was running an annual bomber exercise using a Bear type aircraft on the morning of 9/11. The Alert Fighters that were used for the PANTA flight were postured aggressively because of this USSR "Bear run". The F-15 flight was loaded with three tanks, and an almost full complement of live missiles and ammunition. Under normal circumstance the alert fighters would have been loaded with AIM 9s, but not AIM 7s, and would not have had three full fuel tanks. The larger heat seeking missiles the flight was equipped with on 9/11 could have brought down a larger aircraft. He also noted that in traveling to New York City the flight never exceeded 1.1 mach. For reference, Nash noted that the F-15s, if completely "stripped down" of armament and tanks, could travel at up to 2.5 mach.

Otis AFB and hijacking procedures:

According to Nash, Otis AFB always had an alert mission role, and part of that role has always been to respond to hijack scenarios. The general procedure would be to follow the aircraft 9/11 Classified Information

Nash recalls that pilots had spoken of the possibility of shooting down a commercial airliner, but when that possibility was considered it was always with the circumstance in which the information that would predicate that decision would clearly communicate hostile intent, and there would also be a long time period in which the fighters would tail the aircraft.

Nash further noted that the current procedure for responding, as a fighter asset, to a hijacking is very similar. The pilots themselves do not have any authority to act without direct authorization from CONR (Continental Region) or above. The pace of the communication has been streamlined through the "big voice" link to CONR. The pilots have tested this "big voice" link, which, according to Nash, exists so the appropriate authority can give the pilots their orders directly in the case of another 9/11 type event. Nash speculated that even if the FAA had reacted faster, and NEADS had reacted "say as soon as AA 11 had headed south", PANTA flight "probably would have made the intercept" but would not have had the authorization to shoot it down. Nash postulated that this type of scenario may have been discussed at meetings for air sovereignty training.

Intercepts and Exercises:

Nash has participated in both Alert Forces Exercises (AFE) and Spades, both of which are evaluation exercises. An example of this is when the Air Force uses a "T33 or a like jet" and the fighter pilots intercept and track it. This exercises and evaluates the C2 procedures and the pilots' ability to authenticate all their orders.

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Nash also spoke of requirements to "intercept low, intercept slow" using Night Vision Goggles (NVGs). In many of the low intercepts [REDACTED] 9/11 Classified Information

Before September 11th all the intercepts Nash was scrambled on were of low importance – "it would be a Navy or a Coast Guard aircraft that wasn't speaking to anyone. Nothing was real".

Nash noted that in one circumstance post 9/11 in Atlantic City was scrambled. Nash commented though that even though Otis was scrambled first, the Atlantic City fighters reached the target first. He does not know why NEADS scrambled capacity from both bases.

Military/FAA relationship:

Since 9/11 Nash scrambled to intercept an aircraft that had a faulty transponder. It was a small airplane at low altitude, and the FAA gave a vector as an intercept point. The airplane was only at a few thousand feet, but because of the plane's faulty transponder it was broadcasting a much higher altitude. Thus the fighters were told to maintain a high altitude at 25,000 ft. The fighter pilots requested to drop altitude to identify and possibly assist the aircraft in question. But the FAA would not allow them to, and did not clear the airspace. Based on this event Nash speculated that if an event is important enough for fighters to be scrambled pilots should have the authority to intercept by clearing their own airspace (avoiding traffic by using their own radar in order to reach a target). There is a procedure to ask NEADS for the ATHIO (Authorization for Intercept Order) to have authority to maintain their own separation, but the pilots were not aware of this at the time of this event. The plane in question was flying low over Manhattan and eventually landed in Long Island. Unfortunately Nash's flight was unable to intercept because of the delay and argument with the FAA over receiving clearance to enter the airspace. As a recommendation, Nash noted that the flight lead should have the authority to clear its own airspace.

While patrolling the New York City cap post 9/11 Nash noticed that the level of air traffic makes the process of identifying an aircraft in question extremely difficult. He would like NEADS to have a communication link with the F15 fighter data link so that identification can be pinpoint precise. Nash has intercepted an aircraft that was squawking a hijack code because its transponder was cycled incorrectly, but criticizes that the FAA did not pass information that would be helpful for the identification process. This is specifically unique to NYC when they need to identify an aircraft in the midst of heavy traffic.

Overall Nash noted that the relationship between the FAA and the military did not change dramatically before 9/11, and has not changed dramatically since. From Nash's perspective there is no real conflict between the FAA and the military. He noted that since the military has the warning areas his exposure from Otis AFB has been one of "mostly cooperation".

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COMSAC:

Nash reviewed a [REDACTED]

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Nash explained the procedure for authenticating an order on 9/11: [REDACTED]

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[REDACTED] Scrambled orders are authenticated as well, and the communication would approximate "active air scramble time is ---- Zulu with authentication ----".

The COMSAC also contains the procedures to follow in-flight under three general states: [REDACTED] On 9/11, Colonel Duffy [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] Nash used his in flight recorder to record that they had gone [REDACTED]

Regarding [REDACTED] post 9/11, Nash commented that he has not specifically flown over the [REDACTED] but has flown the cap over [REDACTED] which is roughly a two minute flight to engage a target of interest [REDACTED] Nash also noted it is less than an eight minute flight once airborne to Boston from Otis.

In the fighter cockpit is a device that records what is in the HUD (Heads Up Display) and on the radar. Those recordings still exist, and would be, according to Nash, "a pretty good source", but Nash also noted that "they" are "real sensitive" about releasing them for review.

Nash and Duffy did write down their recollections of 9/11 close thereafter the event. Nash noted that he personally uses the document to jog his memory when speaking about his actions on that day.

Nash and Duffy gave their statements in written format to the base intelligence section.

Nash explained to Commission staff that the base tried to keep Nash and Duffy's identities as the first fighters responding to the attacks secret from the media. He noted that unfortunately through an interview a traditional National Guardsman breached confidentiality in a report that he conducted in a civilian capacity. Nash explained that the tape of the interview was intended for General Arnold's use; but the broadcaster also used it his personal broadcast.

Recommendations:

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In summation of his suggestions, Nash reiterated that alert pilots should have the ability to clear their own space ("go where they need to go"). He believes the pilots can take responsibility for avoiding any aircraft in their vicinity.

Nash also noted that it is extremely important for NEADS to have a simultaneous display of the same fighter data link that is displayed in the cockpits of the F-15s NEADS controls. Nash noted that this would be especially useful over crowded airspace.

Finally, he suggested having a VHF radio in the F-15s to listen in on the FAA's control over an aircraft. He also noted that it is always a benefit to have modern robust fighters.

Training:

Nash stated that fighter pilot training is appropriate and more than sufficient to respond to intercept orders. He noted that fighter pilots are trained to engage other fighters in combat – and thus the maneuvering and skill set required to intercept a commercial airliner, or to clear airspace and maintain appropriate separation, in comparison, is very basic.

Nash noted that for training purposes pilots fly unarmed aircraft, "Line Birds"; so even when there are fighters in the air during the initial stages of events, those fighters may not be the appropriate asset to respond to the order of an air alert scramble.

Contact:

Nash gave Commission staff his contact information, as follows: duty phone: (508) 557 4390; and home phone 9/11 Personal Privacy

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