

MEMORANDUM FOR THE RECORD

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Event: Captain Charles Joseph Leidig, U.S.N., Commandant of Midshipmen, U.S. Naval Academy

Type: Taped Interview

Date: April 29, 2004

Special Access Issues: Conducted in Joint Chiefs of Staff offices. Analog tape made by the Joint Chiefs of Staff liaison and provided to Commission Staff

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Team: 8

Participants (non-Commission): Colonel Sue Kuehl, J3, a JCS Legal officer was present

Participants (Commission): Dana Hyde, Miles Kara, Kevin Shaeffer, John Azzarello, John Farmer

Preamble

[~~FOUO~~] On 9/11 Captain Leidig was the action Deputy Director for Operations (DDO), Operations Team 2, J3, Joint Chiefs of Staff. He was sitting in place of the Operations Team 2 DDO, then Brigadier General Montague Winfield, USA, who was attending a meeting elsewhere in JCS spaces. The meeting was a USAF-convened session for general officers who rated Air Force officers. At least one other trained DDO, BG Seip, USA, also attended that meeting. Such meetings are generally not disturbed unless the reason is significant.

Background.

[~~FOUO~~] On Sep 10 he was the Deputy for Command Center Operations. He was the Colonel/Captain responsible for making sure the Command Center operated properly. He had been on the Joint Staff since mid-July and qualified to be a DDO about a month previous to 9/11. He was qualified to substitute for any of the DDO's who led the five Command Center watch teams.

On 9-11

[~~FOUO~~] General Winfield asked him the afternoon before if he would sit in as DDO for Operations Center Team 2. By agreement, he came in at 0830, received the intelligence and other turn over briefings, and assumed the duty of Deputy Director of Operations. The Assistant DDO was Commander Pat Gardner, USN. He couldn't recall the names of the other Operations Team 2 personnel on watch that day.

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[~~FOUO~~] As a DDO typically he would receive an intelligence briefing by the DDI, Duty Director of Intelligence, talk to watch standers in the back room, check the communications board, and receive an update from the Assistant DDO. He did not attend the Chairman's brief that morning.

[~~FOUO~~] Shortly after he received the watch from General Winfield, he saw a report on one of the big news stations, a small light plane had crashed into the World Trade Center. They had live television feed from multiple TV stations. Gardner, he recalled flew as crew on an A-6 and the discussed when they saw and they started the internal JCS notification list, to include the Chairman's office. They also notified the office of the Secretary of Defense. Either he or Commander Gardner would have made the notification calls. He reported that a small airplane crashed into one of the two towers of the World Trade Center.

[~~FOUO~~] He was prompted that the Senior Operations Officer went to gather up as much information as he could and he recalled that one call was made to the FAA. He thought Commander Gardner actually made that call. FAA had a report of a hijacking on a plane that had departed Boston. They asked if FAA needed any assistance. The answer was no, the pilot had called in and said everything was under control and he was going to land at New York shortly. This call was made to the FAA Operations Center

[~~FOUO~~] There was something unusual, he and Gardner thought, that a light plane had crashed into the WTC and that there was a report of a hijacking. This is all before the second plane impacted the other WTC tower.

[~~FOUO~~] The ADDO pass down log was shown to him and he corrected the record to indicate that the Senior Operations Officer made the call to FAA. He was asked if he recalled what was meant by a second aircraft. He did not.

[~~FOUO~~] He did not recall if there was a record of who (he or Gardner) made the notification calls to the senior JCS/DoD leadership. There was a second round of notifications after the second impact. He does not recall if there was a notification between the two impacts. He can't say for sure if a notification of a hijack was made at either notification.

[~~FOUO~~] Between the two impacts he knew two facts; a light airplane had impacted the WTC and there was a report of a hijacking. He does not recall a discussion between the two impacts that a larger aircraft was involved. He watched live on TV the impact of the second aircraft. To him it was obvious it was a terrorist attack or a coordinated attack. His immediate reaction was to make sure notification had been made.

[~~FOUO~~] They then discussed who needed to be in on a conference call and the need for a Significant Even Conference (SIEC) so that a discussion could ensue on what they were going to do. Concerning the SECDEF and the VCJCS, the watch called their Executive Assistants (EA) and it was up to the EA's to notify the principals.

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[FOUO] He and the ADDO are the two officers who decide what conference to convene, when. There was not a specific procedure for a terrorist attack, so they opted for an SIEC because there is flexibility to add in people as needed. They decided that the SIEC conference best fit their needs that morning. He made the decision to initiate the conference; he had that authority. He convened it and he ran it. No one called him with any guidance at that point. He did not recall if there has been a call to the White House at this point.

[FOUO] Concerning the NOIWON call (a Washington area-specific watch officer network that links key 24-hour watches, including the White House Situation Room), he does not recall who called first. It is not uncommon for the White House to call first, while the NMCC is making its notifications. That, and most other calls to the NMCC were seeking whatever additional information was available. He recalled no situational awareness that came from the NOIWON call.

[FOUO] He was told that the SIEC was convened between 0920 and 0925 and was asked if he was aware of any other aircraft out there, lost, missing or hijack. He did not recall being concerned about any other aircraft at the point that the SIEC was convened. The only plane he knew about was the one that was going to land in NYC and that had not been resolved.

[FOUO] He recalled that FAA only had one STU-III and they could not stay up on a conference on that phone.

[FOUO] He had no awareness of AA77 coming back to Washington D.C. His first awareness was a call from the SECDEF's three-star aide who asked if he felt the explosion in the building and asked Leidig to investigate, it might be a terrorist attack.

[FOUO] No one talked Force Protection before the Pentagon was struck, that he recalled.

9/11 Classified Information

[FOUO] He did not recall phone calls to NORAD prior to the advent of the SIEC. At this point Staff turned to the transcript of the Air Threat Conference Call (ATCC) and recalled for him his update. His reference to AA11 he recalled was because that incident was open and not resolved; he said on the conference that AA11 was headed for Washington. He thought his reference was that "it was being confirmed" not that "it has been confirmed." He thought the information came from FAA. They're trying to figure out where the hijacked aircraft was going.

[FOUO] There was not a separate hijack conference, he said. Staff then referred to such as an FAA conference. He does not recall being on any such conference.

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[FOUO] Staff recounted for Liedig, in reference to the SIEC, that NORAD recommended the reconvening of the conference as an ATCC. He thought the SIEC was the right conference, the ATCC had cold war implications and brought a different group of people to a conference.

[FOUO] The plane that hit the Pentagon was not the same plane that was under discussion in the Air Threat Conference Call. The fact that he transitioned to an ATCC, in retrospect, he thought was because he perceived an air threat at that time. He recalled that they were notifying people continuously and did not recall who was notified that the ATCC was convened, but was confident that notification was made. He recalled very clearly being frustrated that he could not keep FAA in the conference. They would ask questions, FAA would not be there, and they would have to redial them. He thought it would have been the ADDO or the SOO who was trying to keep FAA in the conference by calling their watch center; he referred to it as an ops center.

[FOUO] He did not recall if the VCJCS was in the ATCC conference, by telephone. He said they would have been trying to do so; he is a member of the conference.

[SECRET-NF] Staff reviewed with him the NORAD update (prior to reconvening as an ATCC) and that NORAD was not expressing concern. At this point, he emphasized, the NMCC is an information gathering node.

[FOUO] He described his situation as a multi-tiered battle, to include knowing about consequence management underway elsewhere in the building. He recalled his situational awareness on the Pentagon crash as being an aircraft was from CNN.

[FOUO] Leidig is certain that Winfield returned after the Pentagon was hit. He is not certain of Winfield's arrival in relationship with the Vice Chairman.

[FOUO] The only specific situational awareness he recalled was on a hijacked airplane that was a threat to Chicago. He was referred to a NORAD report of "a possible fourth" aircraft. He did not recall where the term "fourth" came from. He was not aware of any other continuous open line with either the FAA or with NORAD.

[FOUO] When PEOC asked about any other hijacked aircraft, he asked for a NORAD update. When that did not occur he gave the update to the PEOC based on what he knew at the time.

Tape turned over

[FOUO] Discussion picked up with discussion about D1989. He recalled that he thought at that time that D1989 was still a threat. He is pointed to the Sears Tower issue. He is certain that the Vice Chairman was in the room at the time. He recalled looking at him and saying there is a recommendation to evacuate the tower. He remembered General Meyers saying that was a good idea, the military supports it. It makes sense to him, today, that there was a threat to Chicago.

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[FOUO] Concerning General Winfield's arrival, his recall was that he looked up at one point and General Winfield was standing next to him. After the plane hit the Pentagon his context was that the room was full (he used the figure 30-35) of Admirals and Generals and Secretary of Defense and staffs. He recalled that General Meyers looked at him at one time and realized the coordinator was not a General as the position called for and asked who the General or Admiral was that had duty that day. Leidig doesn't recall the time in the sequence of events but the guidance was to get General Winfield briefed up and in the chair. Senior officer first there was General Rosa, the J-33. He was in relatively early, his office was close by. He was there before the Vice Chairman.

[FOUO] They did not have the thought in the Command Center to put all the aircraft in the United States on the ground. There was no discussion about that event before it occurred.

[FOUO] Leidig did not know that there were fighter aircraft in CAP over DC before discussions at the national level about that need. He did remember discussions about fighter support for Air Force One, in the conference and not on a separate line.

[FOUO] He can't say that there was a separate source for the PEOC report of an inbound aircraft. He equated that report to the same plane that had been headed to Chicago.

[FOUO] He deferred to the transcript of the Air Threat Conference for definitive information as to when FAA was on the Conference. He did not recall anyone coming in from another room or calling out himself to bring FAA into the conference.

[FOUO] Concerning Andrews, he thought Commander Gardner might have been handling any such calls. He recalled that General Meyers was using available phones to talk to senior officers at multiple locations. He and other Generals/Admirals were working issues using a bank of available phones. The Air Threat Conference was on speaker so everyone could hear. He recalled the room going quiet when the shutdown language came over the Conference.

[FOUO] Concerning the threat to DC, the NMCC was convinced, he recalled that there was an inbound threat to the Pentagon. He sense was that there were fighters in the air and they were trying to get them focused on the inbound threat. He had a hard time getting someone to tell him about the fighters.

[FOUO] He characterized his job as a person getting a thousand reports and having to decide what to do. His job was to moderate the conference and facilitate the force flow (military reference to generating a response). The J-3 has the operational job.

[FOUO] He recalled that his ADDO had to set up the separate unclassified line with FAA because their STU-III was tied up. This in reference to a line in the Air Threat Conference about a separate FAA line.

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[FOUO] "Weapons Free." He didn't recall that the use of that phrase registered. Other than reading the transcript he had no recall. He doesn't think that phrase usaged rose to the level of giving an order.

Note: Dana noted that we were at the 44 minute in the time-hack version of the Air Threat Conference.

[FOUO] Concerning the first registering of the Vice President's shoot down language. He recalled that it was more specific than what is registered in the transcript at this point. It is more of a question than an order. He doesn't think that they have given the order at that point.

[FOUO] He recalled language that when a plane got 15 minutes outbound (he meant inbound) they had authority to engage. That language apparently came during a blank portion of the tape. [Staff Note. The taping device that day was an analog device that required that someone pay attention and periodically flip the cassette or insert a new one. His recollection was, on reading the transcript, that there were conversations not recorded.] He thought he was still the DDO at this point, not General Winfield. [He later recalled that there wasn't that much missing from the transcript.]

[FOUO] He recalled a discussion about what they were going to do with any future threats and that's when the Vice President came forward with other specificity. However, the "pin drop" moment was when the "15 minutes" language came over the speaker phone. All heads in the room turned toward the speaker, he recalled.

[FOUO] All his conversations were with the Vice Chairman. The SECDEF was in and out during the day and General Meyers frequently talked to him.

[FOUO] Passing the order. If it was said on the Conference that constituted the passing of an order. He was not in any conversations or discussions to establish ROE.

[FOUO] General Winfield took over at some point in relation to the report of the Pennsylvania crash. [Crash was at 10:03, so any reporting would be after that time.]

[FOUO] There was a question as to whether the military shot down the airplane that he believes was not captured on the transcript. The issue was who's talking to those pilots right now so we can talk to them and find out if the fighters shot down an aircraft. His recall was that the fighters overhead were Andrews fighters.

[FOUO] After General Winfield takes over he then stands next to him and listens to the Conference. He then transitions into his regular job which was to run the Command Center. He then starts dealing with the smoke and other issues effecting the operation of the Center.

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[~~FOUO~~] SVTS. He recalled that from time to time the SECDEF stepped out of the room to participate. He did not know what node the SECDEF used or who he talked to. He did not recall receiving any information derived from the SVTS, specifically.

[~~FOUO~~] DEFCON 3. There was a historical discussion about how the move to DEFCON 3 went during previous crises, Cuba specifically. He recalled that they showed General Meyers that he had approval authority to go to DEFCON 3. Their reference was a book on the shelf which they used and showed to the Vice Chairman. He did not recall a discussion about any NORAD CINC assessment.

[~~FOUO~~] After Action Report. He worked on it as the Deputy for Command Center Operations. His source was not the transcript. He had not seen the transcript until he reviewed in preparation for this interview. He recalled they used notes and other contemporary documents. He reviewed it at times, but did not work on the details. He recalled John Brundermann (whose name is on the document) as a member of Operations Team 2.

[~~FOUO~~] There was never a doubt, he said, that the President was in control that day. His specific reference was to the Vice President's language, "I've confirmed..." He also knows from his job that the President is always capable of constant communication with the national leadership. He again reaffirmed that there was never a doubt in his mind.

Second Tape ran out at this point. Dana Hyde was concluding by asking Capt Leidig about observations in the After Action Report. I don't recall anything remarkable about that concluding discussion.

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