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MEMORANDUM FOR THE RECORD

Event: Otis Air Force Base (Otis AFB) Interviews

Type of event: Interview with Tech. Sgt. Michael Kelly

Date: October 14, 2003

Special Access Issues: None

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Team Number: 8

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

Participants - Non-Commission: Col. Paul G. Worcester, Tech. Sgt. Michael Kelly, Andrew Huddleston (Dep Ch, Plans, Integration & Transformation Div, AF/XOHP, Phone: 703 696-0024, Fax: 703 588-0636)

Participants - Commission: John Azzarello, Geoffrey Brown

Air Defense/Superiority Mission:

Kelly explained to Commission staff that Otis Air Force Base typically keeps two F-15 Air Alert Fighters at alert status, as well as two fighter pilots from the 102nd Fighter Wing at alert status at all times. The pilots are at base on call on 24 hour shifts.

Background & Otis AFB Communications:

Kelly is primarily responsible for communicating directives from NORAD (North American Aerospace Defense Command) and NEADS (Northeastern Airspace Defense Sector) to Otis AFB. He performs this function on twelve hour shifts from the Command Post. Kelly has the ability and the responsibility to immediately alert base personnel of orders from NEADS through UHF Radio, Base PA and the Klexon (Base alarm). Along with the notification of the base personnel of orders, Kelly's duty is also to coordinate the

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NORAD schedules regular radio checks of these systems.

SoF (Supervisor of Flight) Desk:

The Base Operations and the SoF (Supervisor of Flight) desk (a separate area) control training missions through radio links. The SoF desk has a pilot whose primary

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function is to provide mission support (logistical, mechanical) in all flight emergencies. The SoF desk handles most training missions, whereas the Command Post is responsible for real-world use of Otis AFB's NORAD Air Defense assets, as well as the real-world use of the 102nd Fighter Wing's national guard role.

Command Post:

According to Kelly, the Command Post is best described as "a reaction-type office", and has check lists that dictate the correct response to different scenarios. During the day shift there is one duty controller and one supervisor. In the evening, the post is manned [REDACTED]

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In the past the Command Post's information displays were simple grease boards, but since 9/11 they have gone to computer displays. There are [REDACTED]

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9/11:

According to Kelly, the morning of 9/11 was relatively standard at the Command Post. He received a phone call from the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) Boston Air Route Control Center (ZBW) asking for a telephone number for NEADS to call to report a possible hijack. Kelly gave the ZBW caller a phone number to NEADS, transferred the call, and then called NEADS himself to notify them. The SoF that day was Colonel Tracy, and Kelly asked Tracy to come to the Command Post. By the time Kelly went to dial NEADS, the "scramble line" rung. The scramble line is a direct phone to the Command Post at Otis AFB from NEADS. Kelly further explained that the phone line is only one way, and that Command Post officers cannot call to NEADS or to NORAD through that line. Kelly received orders to scramble the Otis AFB air defense asset F-15s on this line. Kelly alerted the base of this directive, and further communicated in the minutes thereafter with NEADS to gather more information on the target. The communication of further target information was not delivered to pilots from Kelly. Once the fighters launched NEADS gave the pilots their orders.

Kelly recalled next receiving a phone call from the SoF Desk that informed him of an aircraft crash into the World Trade Center (WTC). Kelly called NEADS, and while on the phone with them was informed of a second aircraft crash into the WTC.

Kelly related to Commission staff that the training missions that were airborne at the time from Otis were only in an exercise configuration, and thus were at a "safe guns" (non-firing) weapons posture; further those flights more than likely had only one fuel tank. Kelly realized that if the fighters outfitted on base for training missions were to be launched for long air superiority/sovereignty missions, those fighters would need "hot" (live) guns, missiles, and extra gas tanks (the F-15s can carry three fuel tanks). Kelly further noted that to outfit fighters with such a configuration would be considered

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generating a war time posture. To accommodate this change in posture the base Battle Staff convened. They decided to transition from the pre-9/11 orientated National Guard Unit, with only two twenty-four hour alert ready fighters, to a full possible air war scenario posture. The base prepared its air assets accordingly.

Kelly noted that on 9/11 Otis got fourteen of their fighters mission capable by the end of the day, that there were six in the air at a time and that the base could draw on approximately 32 pilots (a handful of which were unavailable since they are commercial air pilots, and were at ground stop in airports away from Cape Cod).

Protocols of Command and the duality of the Otis AFB mission:

Kelly noted to Commission staff that Colonel Don Quenneville was the wing commander on 9/11, and is now a general stationed at the Massachusetts National Guard Headquarters in Milford, MA. Quenneville's orders came through NEADS since the event involved a NEADS coordinated response, but technically Quenneville is a part of the state guard command structure. Kelly informed that it was clear though that on 9/11 Quenneville made the decision to operate as a national asset, with NEADS (the "war fighting agency") in overall command. Quenneville treated Otis on 9/11 as if it were fully activated and thus providing service to the nation, not just the state.

Colonel Robert K. Marr, Jr., the Commander at NEADS, was the officer that Quenneville reported to regarding the two air superiority/sovereignty F-15s, call-sign PANTA, that launched initially from Otis AFB in response to the attacks on September 11, 2001. On 9/11 Quenneville postured all Otis AFB fighters for NEADS use in anticipation of national need. Kelly noted that in order to do so, Otis AFB began organizing munitions even though they "technically" had not received that order. Colonel Worcester, now Wing Commander for the 102nd, indicated that there was some concern regarding the legality of this decision, since the mechanisms under the full function of law were not in place to unload the munitions. He noted that if there is no national command and control functioning Otis' primary responsibility is to defend their "little portion of the world" (MA), and that the ability to defend the self caveats all other circumstances. Further, Worcester noted that on 9/11 there was no technical coverage for liability "if a sergeant drops a million dollar missile". Worcester further noted that this "gray area" between the necessity to anticipate the order to move into a more aggressive posture and the legal authority (through chain of command) to do so still exists. But Worcester also indicated that he believes Quenneville's decision was "the right one", and if there is a similar event again, he would follow the same steps.

In air defense there are state agreements in which the governor has authority to control the asset of the air defense capabilities in their state. A corresponding piece to carrying out this mission is the need for a fully considered and fleshed out liability coverage that takes into account both the safety of the guard members and the liability associated with the base's arsenal. Worcester noted his opinion that the base commanders are "really sticking our necks out" considering these circumstance. On 9/11 Quenneville may have received reassurances through the CATS Cell at the MA State

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Guards Bureau that his decision to posture the air defense assets aggressively would be supported, according to Worcester.

Post 9/11:

Kelly noted that in the aftermath of 9/11 a new response posture was enacted to account for the defense of national airspace. He noted that this measure was taken since the assets in place on September 10, 2001 were external orientated and not as robust as they might have been to protect the country's interior. Worcester speculated that part of this was due to the military downsize after the end of the Cold War. Worcester continued and noted that the current scheme needs to be rethought as well. He believes the execution authority and response levels have changed, as well as the complement of personnel. But Worcester noted that all these changes must still be properly resourced. Kelly noted that he believes Otis AFB does have the response execution ready to respond definitively to a 9/11 type scenario.

Training Missions:

Kelly explained to Commission staff that training missions are coordinated through the Operations Desk and the SoF desk. If no asset related to the NEADS ready status F15s for the air superiority or air sovereignty mission were to be deployed, Kelly would have very little to do with a mission or a flight, since the Command Post is strictly for "real-world" events and/or NORAD directed exercises. The exception to this is if there occurs an in-flight issue that requires base assets (fire response, ambulance, coast guard); Kelly would be involved from the Command Post.

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