

AIR DEFENSE RESPONSE

September 11, 2001

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This paper documents a very strange story, one that would play well as a motion picture. Outwardly, it is the story of five people whose actions resulted in the collapse of airspace defense on September 11, 2001, but a full telling of this story, this history, will require the ferreting out of those ultimately responsible, who remain behind the curtain, and who will likely remain there for many years beyond our lifetimes.



Nevertheless, we are each duty-bound to explore the time in which we live, and to pass what we find to the future.

There are two aspects to this story: the first relates to airspace defense protocols that were reissued just three months before September 11, 2001; the second relates to four (of five) key people who were either replaced on that day, or who were absent from their posts. The combination of the airspace defense protocol rewrite, and the handful of personnel substitutions on 9/11 cleared the way for the disaster that followed and allowed the face of

this country to turn toward retributive war, fought atop oil bearing lands.

Many questions remain involving the unprecedented failures of the World Trade Buildings, failures of the intelligence community to head off the attacks in their early planning stages, and finally the spectacular failure of the military to defend U.S. airspace, despite the investment of billions in detection equipment, aircraft, highly trained pilots, and the like.

This paper asks, and, I believe, answers the question: What enabled multiple hijacked aircraft to continue unimpeded flights without interception long after having been identified as flying weapons? More specifically, what process enabled the hijacking pilots the time to reach their targets - recalling that time allotted to hijacker negotiation is logically reserved for those wishing to negotiate. There are only two possible explanations: either this was the result of a terrible set of coincidences and incompetencies, or 9/11 was the result of purposeful action taken by a few well placed people within this government at the time.

Armed with evidence gathered by hundreds of grass roots citizen organizations and individuals, it has become clear that the official story of 9/11 is an inconsistent fiction. The official 9/11 Commission Report offers the innocent conclusion that incompetence and errors resulted in disaster. A careful review of the evidence now on the table leads to a different set of conclusions: the attacks were successful because 1) airspace defenders were newly briefed on acceptable air-defense tactics under a newly revised, but functionally unchanged set of protocols that effectively slowed emergency response times; and 2) of the five key personnel within the air-defense chain of command on 9/11 - two were new on the job, and two were wholly absent from their posts.

PART 1: AIRSPACE-DEFENSE PROTOCOLS OF 9/11

Rewritten, functionally unchanged

The Department of Defense (DoD) protocol defining appropriate actions to be taken in the event of airspace emergencies and hijacked airplanes was rewritten after many years of successful application just three months before 9/11/01 - on June 1, under the direction of former Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld.



Painstaking reviews of that protocol document (CJCSI 3610.10A)¹ and of its predecessor (CJCSI 3610.10)² reveal no meaningful changes other than its relocation under the Joint Chiefs of Staff organizational flow chart. There are sentence rewrites, altered paragraph contents, etc., but careful flow charting of each protocol leads to identical sets of expected behaviors.

Despite the fact that the relocated protocol is functionally identical to the earlier version, the rewrite nonetheless played a significant role in the events of 9/11. As you digest this information, keep in mind that the FAA officially cataloged dozens of North American Air Defense Command (NORAD) airspace scramble/intercepts (fighter jets dispatched to intercept errant aircraft – ready to render aid or to shoot-down, as required by threat) between September 2000 and June 2001,³ yet between June 1, 2001, and September 10, 2001, there were none.^{4a} Following 9/11, the number of scramble/intercept events again became common.^{4b}

Each protocol – old (CJCSI 3610.10²) and new (CJCSI 3610.10A¹) – defined two action tracks:

1. **EMERGENT** – immediate action is required
2. **NON-EMERGENT** – a slower process appropriate to a typical hijacking, where demands are issued and negotiations are expected to proceed.^{1,2}

The emergent track empowers air traffic controllers to communicate immediately and directly with the military to request assistance as needed, with no further authorization required.

The slower (hijack) track was designed to allow sufficient time to notify and synchronize the highest reaches of government as processes would unfold. In those cases, a contact chain of command was clearly defined, beginning with the FAA, then continuing across to the DoD chain of command -- headed by the Secretary of Defense -- whose authorization was finally required for any military assistance given.

If the relocated protocols are functionally identical, why were they rewritten three months before 9/11? And, how is it that the number of fighter-interceptor scramble orders dropped to zero for those three months^{4a}, after having been so common during the months and years preceding the rewrite? Robin Hordon^{4b, 4c}, an experienced past FAA Air Traffic Controller, who in former years helped write airspace protocols for the government, offers a cogent explanation: when newly (re)written protocols are released, a series of briefings are given to those who will be responsible to act on them. Briefings are personal, given on a one-to-one or small “need-to-know” group basis and can contain subtle biases regarding how those in upper levels expect the protocols to be implemented.

There is no log or paper trail of the biased briefings. All that remains is the numerical evidence: scramble orders between June 1, 2001 and September 10, 2001 dropped to zero.

Summarizing: the newly rewritten, but functionally unchanged protocol rewrite required the re-briefing of FAA and DOD personnel, at which time a bias towards applying the slow-mode approach to airspace emergencies was emphasized thereby creating an invisible partial stand-down mechanism.

PART 2: ADMINISTRATIVE STAFFING

Bewildered Chain of Command on 9/11/01

There were several simultaneous key FAA and military personnel changes that took place on the morning of September 11, 2001, which, in concert with the slow-mode Airspace Defense Protocol discussed above, resulted in a finely tuned response timeline set to trail events as they occurred. It is that fine tuning that enabled the devastation of 9/11.

The following discussion will focus on the slow (hijack) mode chain of command and personnel who filled each of the positions on 9/11. The command chain is summarized here:

**FAA: Boston Center → Regional Operations Center → Command Center → Headquarters →
DoD: National Military Control Center → Secretary of Defense → NEADS/NORAD**

FAA SIDE OF THE CHAIN OF COMMAND

Boston Center - Air Traffic Control → FAA Regional Operations Center



US airspace is divided into a series of regionalized facilities and sectors. Aircraft flying within specific sectors are displayed on radar screens monitored by FAA Air Traffic Controllers within various facilities, depending on the region over-flown.

Flight 11 departed Logan Airport in Boston at 7:59am.⁵ Shortly thereafter, it came under the “control” (monitoring on radar and issued flight commands) of FAA’s Boston Center. At 8:14am the aircraft failed to respond to an order to climb. Moments later it became clear

that a serious in-flight emergency was unfolding, and within 5-10 minutes controllers understood that an atypical and violent hijack was underway.⁶

The responsible FAA controller, and the FAA team at the Boston Center appeared to have implemented BOTH protocols, the NORDO (No Radio) / in-flight emergency protocol, and the hijack protocol, as events spun out of control. While the Boston Center Watch Desk personnel took the protocol’s slow (hijack) track – alerting FAA’s New England Regional Operations Center⁷ the Military Liaison Officer at the Boston Center monitoring the flight contacted the defense department directly, seeking immediate assistance.^{8a, 8b} The DoD responded to that call for immediate action by essentially setting in motion the Protocol’s hijack (slow) track, with pilots being alerted, but aircraft NOT being emergently scrambled.⁹ Thus, despite the protocol defining two track options, a bias existed that functionally melded the two into one -- slow-mode track.

FAA Regional Operations Center → FAA Command Center



The Regional Operations Center having been contacted by Boston Center, continued to operate under the Protocol's slow (hijack) mode, next contacting the FAA Command Center in Herndon, Virginia. There, Ben Sliney, FAA National Operations Manager, was working his first morning on the job.¹⁰



Given his inexperience, he took what appeared to him to be a straightforward path, contacting the next link in the chain of command -- the Hijack Coordinator at FAA Headquarters in Washington, D.C. It is not unreasonable to conclude that had he collected more than a few hours of experience on the job, he might have visualized the unfolding events as requiring emergent action. He would have then been fully authorized to call the military directly and request an immediate scramble/intercept.

FAA Command Center → FAA Headquarters

The protocol required Mr. Sliney to speak directly with the Hijack Coordinator, the only person authorized to contact the military at the National Military Command Center (NMCC). Lt. General Mike Canavan, a military intelligence specialist who had been installed as Associate Administrator for Civil Aviation Security only nine months earlier, was the designated Hijack Coordinator on 9/11. But, he could not be found at FAA Headquarters on that date. He was in Puerto Rico at the time. And, he left no designated replacement in his absence!^{11a}



Mike Canavan: *“Here's my answer -- and it's not to duck the question. Number one, I was visiting the airport in San Juan that day when this happened. That was a CADEX airport, and I was down there also to remove someone down there that was in a key position. So when 9/11 happened, that's where I was. I was able to get back to Washington that evening on a special flight from the Army back from San Juan, back to Washington. So everything that transpired that day in terms of times, I have to -- and I have no information on that now, because when I got back we weren't -- that wasn't the issue at the time. We were -- when I got back it was, What are we going to do over the next 48 hours to strengthen what just happened?”*^{11b} (Lt. General Canavan removed himself from the FAA the following month.)¹²



Ben Sliney: *“I said something like that's incredible. There's only one person. There must be someone designated or someone who will assume the responsibility of issuing an order, you know. We were becoming frustrated in our attempts to get some information. What was the military response?”*¹³

FAA HAND-OFF TO THE DOD CHAIN OF COMMAND

After an unspecified delay, someone at FAA's Headquarters finally took over the duty reserved for the missing Hijack Coordinator and made the required NMCC contact.¹⁴

DOD CHAIN OF COMMAND

National Military Command Center (NMCC) → NE Air Defense Sector (NEADS)



That morning NMCC, located within the Pentagon, was headed by a stand-in who had only qualified for duty in the Command Center one month earlier, Captain Charles Leidig. The Center's longtime commander, Brigadier General Montague Winfield, had – **the night before** – instructed Captain Leidig to take charge the next morning, on 9/11. Leidig remained in that position until approximately 10:30am – after all aircraft had crashed.¹⁵

(Note: Captain Leidig's official testimony was not at all clear on these matters and further details are not available.) Leidig is said to have received information from the (unnamed) stand-in at FAA Headquarters, and at sometime thereafter, is said to have contacted Northeast Air Defense Sector (NEADS), commanded by Colonel Robert Marr -- who had earlier already been contacted by Boston Center Controllers via the emergent track of the Protocol (see above).

NE Air Defense Sector (NEADS) → North American Air Defense Command (NORAD)



Colonel Marr, continuing to run the exceptionally slow-track protocol, next ordered fighter pilots at Otis Air Base to "battle stations," but they were not given the order to scramble.⁹ Marr then spent 8 minutes phoning his superior, Major General Larry Arnold of NORAD's US Continental Region, seeking authorization to scramble the alerted fighter-interceptors. Despite the fact that the June, 2001, hijack protocol required scrambles to be authorized by the Secretary of Defense, Arnold issued the command at 8:46am, stating he would obtain authorization later.¹⁶ Thus the command to scramble was finally issued - far too late - at 8:46am,



literally seconds before Flight 11 impacted WTC-N.¹⁶

The remainder of the morning went about the same.

Secretary of Defense



And, where was the Secretary of Defense, whose authorization to scramble fighter aircraft was required under the new (old) slow-hijack protocol? Mr. Rumsfeld was effectively out of the loop until well after the Pentagon was finally attacked. He testified that he had been meeting with Congressional representatives in a room a few steps away from the NMCC when he first learned of the World Trade Center attack, but rather than contacting the NMCC, he instead concluded his breakfast meeting and moved to another.^{17,}

¹⁸ He remained outside of the chain of command, requiring Major General Larry Arnold to bypass the Secretary's required approval for interceptor/fighter scrambles, and issue that order - too late. Mr. Rumsfeld finally presented himself to the NMCC after all 9/11 events had ended.

SUMMARY: 9/11 SLOW-MODE HIJACK PROTOCOL ADMINISTRATORS

COMMAND FACILITY	ADMINISTRATOR IN CHARGE	STATUS OF THE ADMINISTRATOR IN CHARGE
FAA Command Ctr.	Ben Sliney (<i>FAA National Ops Mgr</i>)	On the job for less than one day
FAA Headquarters	Lt.Gen.Mike Canavan (<i>Hijack Coord</i>)	Military Intel.; in Puerto Rico – No designated replacement
NMCC	Capt.Charles Leidig (<i>Acting NMCC Dir</i>)	Newly certified, standing in that morning for the first time
NEADS/NORAD	Colonel Marr/Maj.Gen.Arnold (<i>COs</i>)	8” for Marr to reach Arnold before too-late scramble order.
Sec. of Defense	Donald Rumsfeld (<i>Sec. of Defense</i>)	Incommunicado (within the Pentagon)

CONCLUSIONS

The new protocols (i.e. the old, but rewritten/relocated protocols) allowed for briefings – sans a paper trail – that evidence suggests biased how future airspace events would be interpreted, melding the two possible response tracks into one slow-mode protocol. In addition, the slow-mode was cranked through a command chain that was preloaded with people who were new on the job, or absent from their posts – all leading to the finely tuned failed airspace response on 9/11.

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