

June 9, 2004

Written testimony of Jeff Griffith, Citizen, to the National Commission on Terrorist Attacks Upon the United States. This testimony is provided at the request of the Commission to be made part of the record and carefully studied by the Commission.

I served the FAA as Deputy Director of Air Traffic during the 9/11 terrorist attacks. I retired from FAA on November 3, 2002. This testimony will address my knowledge of actions taken during the time I served in that position, until my retirement.

FAA Headquarters' response on the morning of 9/11, including an understanding of the major actions taken by other FAA facilities:

- Before 9/11, the primary duty of US air traffic controllers was to provide safe, efficient and expeditious air traffic services for our national airspace system (NAS) users. Safety was defined as separating air traffic from other traffic, terrain and weather. FAA controllers were trained to use covert signals to help communicate with crewmembers during hijackings, and to notify appropriate officials when such events occurred, but that training never contemplated the kind of hijackings seen on 9/11. While FAA and military air traffic controllers supported DoD contingency plans and exercises, air defense was not considered a role for FAA. FAA air traffic personnel supported DoD efforts to counter threats to the US from outside the country, such as prioritization for air defense fighter intercepts and other DoD support missions, shutdown of navigation aids that might assist incoming enemy aircraft, and restrictions to flight operations not supporting air defense roles. But, again, this support contemplated an airborne threat coming from outside of the US. In fact, memorandums of agreement existed between FAA and DOD that specified procedures to be used (flight routes, altitudes, etc.) whenever our Nation's borders (the Air Defense Identification Zone which surround the United States) were threatened. Similar procedures had not been considered or developed for use within our borders. Although the 9/11 terrorist attacks were not anticipated, FAA controller training designed to respond to the various contingencies presented by the NAS allowed timely and effective actions to be taken to shutdown civil aircraft operations on 9/11 within 4 hours.
- Upon learning of the first aircraft "hitting" the World Trade Center, Air Traffic Services called the Headquarters management team together and began preparing to address an aircraft accident.
- When word of the second aircraft "hitting" the World Trade Center was received, Air Traffic Services set up a situation line with all Regional Air Traffic Division Managers, large facility managers and the Command Center. The purpose of this line was to have real-time information flowing to/from field elements. One person was designated to immediately start the data collection process, including radar plots and voice recordings. I assumed a role in the Washington Operations Center.
- In the Washington Operations Center, a direct communications line was set up to the Air Traffic Control System Command Center. This line became the real-time

source of information on aircraft reported as missing or experiencing other unusual situations.

Coordination and communication between FAA, NORAD, the National Military Command Center (NMCC), and the White House relevant to fully understanding the response to the attacks:

- Air Traffic Control Facilities activated procedures contained in Letters of Agreement with DOD organizations. In most cases, all participants realized the situation was beyond anything anticipated in writing these agreements. Decision makers reacted quickly and professionally to ensure the safety of the aircraft operating in the air traffic system, and to support the military response.
- In Headquarters, Air Traffic Services set up an additional situation room in the front office that was occupied by DOD liaison officers who worked on the Air Traffic Services Headquarters staff.
- In the Washington Operations Center, key personnel were assigned to multiple coordination positions with direct telephone communications to other Government agency key personnel. There were also other “secure” lines established to coordinate with certain organizations. One of these organizations was the National Military Command Center. As information was received from the FAA Air Traffic Control System Command Center on aircraft reported as missing or experiencing other unusual situations over the direct communications line, that information was announced to all key personnel coordinating with other agencies. The key personnel would immediately provide this information to their counterpart on the phone line. The entire group was situated in a manner to facilitate this relay of information.
- At the FAA Air Traffic Control System Command Center, the military officers assigned to the Air Traffic Services Cell became immediately involved in coordinating FAA Air Traffic Control System Command Center actions with military elements.
- The link for exchange of information with the White House was accomplished through Secure Video Teleconference System. Several of these conferences took place.

Post-9/11 changes, or reforms, made to improve FAA’s role in responding to future security breaches:

- After 9/11 the single most significant change in Air Traffic was establishing a direct communications link between FAA, DOD, and NORAD. FAA air traffic personnel worked with DoD and other federal agencies to put in place procedures for closer communication between FAA, DoD and law enforcement agencies. FAA dedicated air traffic control staffing to NORAD facilities for direct support of air defense measures, and to support the newly-established Domestic Events Net (DEN). FAA established the DEN to link, in real time, FAA security and air traffic personnel at headquarters, the Air Traffic Control System Command Center in Herndon, Virginia, all Centers across the country, all NORAD Air

Defense Sectors, and other federal agencies as needed, including Secret Service, Customs, etc.

- FAA developed air traffic procedures to relay timely notifications between FAA and DoD concerning identification and tracking of suspicious pilots/aircraft or targets of interest, specific international air carriers, and aircraft operations in or near certain airports and areas of interest.
- FAA implemented special security measures and airspace changes, and expanded temporary flight restrictions (TFRs) and other airspace control measures to support DoD and law enforcement agencies engaged in NAS threat detection and/or defensive activities.
- FAA developed software to graphically depict these national security TFRs, then established internet access to them for flight service specialists and NAS airspace users.
- FAA has integrated all long range radars into the NORAD system so that all of the Continental U.S. may be viewed. Additional work is ongoing to integrate terminal radars to increase the coverage area.
- FAA expanded its NOTAM processing capability to support the increased number of NOTAMs required for NAS security restrictions, and set up a Flight Service Operations Support Center to explain complicated airspace security restrictions to flight service specialists.
- FAA developed air traffic control procedures that could be implemented at each threat level established by DHS.
- Air Traffic personnel continue to draw lessons learned from crisis management exercises and real-time events to continually re-evaluate and revise air traffic control plans and procedures for NAS security.
- The FAA developed a set of broad instructions to be used as a guideline if the U.S. airspace system is ever again used in terrorist activities.
- FAA accelerated the physical security program at ATC facilities and placed temporary guards at all en route centers, towers and terminal approach controls.

I am sure there are many people who have sifted through thousands of pages of documentation, listened to voice recordings, looked at radar data, and more. They have probably ached every decision that was made on 9/11 by the FAA and the military. I submit that before 9/11, the FAA and the military did not have the same mission as it pertained to national defense. The FAA Act of 1958 is clear: next to safety, the job of the FAA is to support the military and promote air commerce. Air commerce in the United States is a \$900 Billion a year industry. It is the engine of our economy. That is why many of the decision makers regarding aviation on 9/11 were planning how to start up the National Airspace System, the instant we shut it down.

There are still drastic measures in place that prohibit Americans who fly from exercising their freedom: General Aviation aircraft are still prohibited from using Reagan National Airport; local general aviation airports in the D.C. area are nearly off the map, including College Park Airport, the oldest airport in the country. Many flight restrictions are put in place for public events today as a matter of routine. The Capitol was evacuated today because an aircraft strayed into the area; determined not to be a threat.

Much credit should be given to General Eberhart and General Arnold for their efforts on 911. Much credit should also be given to the men and women of the FAA in carrying out their response to 911. This is a system where 65,000 flights operate every day. The number one mission of the FAA is safety. The unprecedented decision to shut down the system is one that required careful consideration, especially while responding to the attacks on 911. The people of the FAA safely recovered 4,500 aircraft and safely landed them without a single incident in two and one-half hours, with total shut down in less than four hours. If you haven't worked a belly full of airplanes all headed at each other with closure rates of up to 1,000 MPH (and still moved some out of harms way of those that were hijacked), you should know it is a skill that requires a lot of guts. There were many early responders on 911. The Commission seems to be intent on criticizing them all.

I am confident the FAA Administrator and the Top Brass in the Military are working full speed ahead to protect our country from future terrorist threats. They must be afforded the opportunity to evaluate any recommendations of the Commission and provide necessary counsel.

Respectfully submitted,

Jeff Griffith