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Complete 911 Timeline

Training Exercises on 9/11

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(6:30 a.m.) September 11, 2001: NORAD on Alert for Emergency Exercises



NORAD's war room in Cheyenne Mountain, Colorado [Source: Val Gempis]

Lieutenant Colonel Dawne Deskins and other day shift employees at NORAD's Northeast Air Defense Sector (NEADS) in Rome, NY, start their workday. NORAD is conducting a week-long, large-scale exercise called Vigilant Guardian. (Seely 1/25/2002) Deskins is regional mission crew chief for the Vigilant Guardian exercise. (ABC News 9/11/2002)

Exercise Includes Simulated Attack on the US - Vigilant Guardian is described as “an exercise that would pose an imaginary crisis to North American Air Defense outposts nationwide”; as a “simulated air war”; and as “an air defense exercise simulating an attack on the United States.” According to the 9/11 Commission, it “postulated a bomber attack from the former Soviet Union.” (Seely 1/25/2002; Filson 2003, pp. 55 and 122;

9/11 Commission 7/24/2004, pp. 458) Vigilant Guardian is described as being held annually, and is one of NORAD's four major annual exercises. (Filson 2003, pp. 41; Arkin 2005, pp. 545; GlobalSecurity (.org) 4/27/2005) However, one report says it takes place semi-annually. (Scott 6/3/2002) Accounts by participants vary on whether 9/11 is the second, third, or fourth day of the exercise. (Code One Magazine 1/2002; Seely 1/25/2002; Kampouris 9/11/2002) Vigilant Guardian is a command post exercise (CPX), and in at least some previous years was conducted in conjunction with Stratcom's Global Guardian exercise and a US Space Command exercise called Apollo Guardian. (US Congress n.d.; Arkin 2005, pp. 545; GlobalSecurity (.org) 4/27/2005) All of NORAD is participating in Vigilant Guardian on 9/11. (Scott 6/3/2002)

Exercise Includes Simulated Hijacking - Vanity Fair reports that the “day's exercise” (presumably Vigilant Guardian) is “designed to run a range of scenarios, including a ‘traditional’ simulated hijack in which politically motivated perpetrators commandeer an aircraft, land on a Cuba-like island, and seek asylum.” (Bronner 8/1/2006) However, at NEADS, most of the dozen or so staff on the operations floor have no idea what the exercise is going to entail and are ready for anything. (Cooper 8/5/2004)

NORAD Fully Staffed and Alert - NORAD is currently running a real-world operation named Operation Northern Vigilance (see September 9, 2001). It may also be conducting a field training exercise calling Amalgam Warrior on this morning (see 9:28 a.m. September 11, 2001). NORAD is thus fully staffed and alert, and senior officers are manning stations throughout the US. The entire chain of command will be in place and ready when the first hijacking is reported. An article later says, “In retrospect, the exercise would prove to be a serendipitous enabler of a rapid military response to terrorist attacks on September 11.” (Scott 6/3/2002; Kelly 12/5/2003) Colonel Robert Marr, in charge of NEADS, will say: “We had the fighters with a little more gas on board. A few more weapons on board.” (ABC News 9/11/2002) However, Deskins and other NORAD officials later are initially confused about whether the 9/11 attacks are real or part of the exercise (see (8:38 a.m.-8:43 a.m.) September 11, 2001).



6:30 a.m. September 11, 2001: White House Situation Room Holds Anti-Terrorism Training Exercise



John Sherman (left) and Rob Hargis (right).
[Source: T.J. Kirkpatrick / MCT]

A spontaneous training exercise is held in the White House Situation Room, based on the scenario of a terrorist bombing in Yemen. In recent months, the Situation Room has been extra vigilant due to the increased reporting of a possible terrorist attack on US interests in the Middle East. Presumably influenced by these concerns, Rob Hargis, the senior duty officer in the Situation Room, now holds an impromptu drill. He says to the others in the room: “Okay, there’s been a large bombing in Yemen. Who does what?” Further details of the exercise are unknown. Commenting on it, John Sherman, one of Hargis’s two assistants, will later say: “We were pretty keen on recognizing an event early. But we had no thoughts that morning about an attack

on the homeland.”

Situation Room Is the 'Nerve Center' of Crisis Management - The Situation Room is a multi-room facility on the ground floor of the White House’s West Wing. It is staffed around the clock by personnel from each military branch, the State Department, and the intelligence agencies. (Bohn 8/29/2011) Its mission is to provide current intelligence and crisis support to the National Security Council staff, the national security adviser, and the president. Its watch teams provide 24-hour monitoring of international events. (Donley, O’Leary, and Montgomery 1997) Throughout the terrorist attacks later this morning, the White House Situation Room will serve as “the nerve center of presidential crisis management,” according to McClatchy Newspapers. However, its director, Navy Captain Deborah Loewer, is away from the White House on this day, accompanying President Bush on his visit to Florida. (Bohn 8/29/2011)

7:00 a.m. -9:03 a.m. September 11, 2001: Preparations Continue at New York Pier for September 12 Bioterrorism Exercise



New York City’s Emergency Operations Center (EOC) set up at Pier 92 on the Hudson River following the 9/11 attacks. [Source: ArcNews]

At Pier 92 on the Hudson River, preparations are underway for a training exercise due to take place there the following day. The exercise, called Tripod, which had been scheduled months earlier, is intended to test how well New York’s Office of Emergency Management (OEM) can administer treatment in response to a biological-terrorist attack (see September 12, 2001). (Griscom 10/15/2001; Giuliani 2002, pp. 355) Pier 92, located just over four miles north-

northwest of the World Trade Center, has been set up as a model distribution station where the simulated victims will be treated. (Jenkins and Edwards-Winslow 9/2003, pp. 15 and 20) Ken Longert, the owner of a theatrical lighting business, arrives at the pier at 7:00 a.m. to help get the place ready for the exercise. He will later recall, “Two or three hundred cadets [presumably with the New York police and fire departments] were there, learning the proper procedures in case some kind of disaster hit New York.” Longert will recall that, seconds after the second WTC tower is hit at 9:03, “all the people from OEM disappeared” from the pier. (DiMarco 2007, pp. 457-458) After OEM’s original command center is destroyed when WTC 7—where it is located—collapses (see (5:20 p.m.) September 11, 2001), Pier 92 will be selected as the location for the substitute command center. (9/11 Commission 5/19/2004) Members of OEM staff have also arrived early this morning at the OEM offices in WTC 7 to prepare for the exercise (see 8:48 a.m. September 11, 2001). (Jenkins and Edwards-Winslow 9/2003, pp. 15)

(8:00 a.m.) September 11, 2001: NORAD Operations Center in Colorado Participating in ‘Simulated Air War’ Training Exercise



Jeff Ford. [Source: Thomas Doscher / US Air Force]

Personnel in NORAD's operations center in Cheyenne Mountain, Colorado, take part in a major Cold War-style training exercise called Vigilant Guardian, a war game in which the theoretical enemy is Russia. (9/11 Commission 3/1/2004 [A](#); Simpson 8/28/2011; Roeder 9/10/2011) All of NORAD, including its subordinate units (see (6:30 a.m.) September 11, 2001), participates in the exercise. (Northeast Air Defense Sector 8/23/2001; Canadian Broadcasting Corporation 9/8/2011) More than 50 people in the NORAD Battle Management Center in Cheyenne Mountain take part. (Tudor 3/2002; Doscher 9/8/2011) Vigilant Guardian is an annual exercise and is scheduled to last two weeks. (Arkin 2005, pp. 545; Canadian Broadcasting Corporation 9/8/2011) It has been underway for several days. Those in the Cheyenne Mountain Operations Center (CMOC) have been participating in it "for at least three or four days," according to Lieutenant Colonel Steven Armstrong, NORAD's chief of plans and forces. (North American Aerospace Defense Command 9/9/2011)


Vigilant Guardian Is a 'Full-Blown Nuclear War' Exercise - Vigilant Guardian is a "transition to wartime operations command post exercise," according to an information page for its participants. (Northeast Air Defense Sector 8/23/2001) The 1st Air Force's book about 9/11 will describe it as a "simulated air war." (Filson 2003, pp. 55) Lieutenant Colonel William Glover, the commander of NORAD's Air Warning Center, will later recall that it involves NORAD "simulating war.... You know, attacks coming from the outside, Soviet-style bombers coming in, cruise-missile attacks, that type of thing." (Canadian Broadcasting Corporation 9/8/2011) Ken Merchant, NORAD's joint exercise design manager, will tell the 9/11 Commission that Vigilant Guardian is a "full-blown nuclear war" exercise, and includes bomber response and intercontinental ballistic missile response. (9/11 Commission 3/4/2004)

Russia Is Imagined Enemy - The theoretical enemy in the exercise is Russia. (Simpson 8/28/2011) According to the 9/11 Commission Report, the exercise "postulated a bomber attack from the former Soviet Union." (9/11 Commission 7/24/2004, pp. 458) Merchant will explain that "NORAD must use Russia in its exercises at the strategic level since no other country poses a great enough threat to NORAD's capabilities and responsibilities." (9/11 Commission 3/4/2004)

Personnel Updated on Exercise during Shift Change - Armstrong will later recall that today starts off "like any other day. We came in thinking it would be a normal day... we did a standard shift changeover in the morning and we were getting right into where we were at in relation to the exercise." He will describe that in a shift change during the exercise, "We'd say, 'Okay, here's what happened during the night shift (or the day shift),' and we'd give each other an update, and then we'd start planning for whatever was on the agenda for that day." (North American Aerospace Defense Command 9/9/2011) According to the Denver Post, after commencing his shift, Armstrong "mapped out strategy in a chess game of ever-escalating scenarios, from strained diplomacy to the outbreak of conventional warfare that headed inexorably toward nuclear conflict" with Russia. (Simpson 8/28/2011)

B-1 Bomber Scheduled to Fly out over Pacific Ocean - The "planned big event for the day" in the exercise is "supposed to be a B-1 bomber that was flying out of Fairchild Air Force Base [in Washington State] and going out over the Pacific," according to Jeff Ford, an Air Force lieutenant colonel who is working in the CMOC. Ford will add that there are "other things going on as part of the exercise, air exercise events, and then some scripted inputs that we were reacting to there in the Air Warning Center, whether it be unknown aircraft that we scramble aircraft for to intercept—or whatever." (Doscher 9/8/2011)

Exercise Posture Allegedly Helps Response to Attacks - Vigilant Guardian will reportedly end after 9:03 a.m., when the second plane hits the World Trade Center (see (Shortly After 9:03 a.m.) September 11, 2001), and the CMOC personnel participating in it will then become involved in responding to the real-world attacks. (Tudor 3/2002; Toronto Star 11/11/2008) Glover will claim that the CMOC's response to the terrorist attacks benefits from the position the operations center is in for the exercise. He will say NORAD is "lucky" because "all the directorates such as operations, logistics, security, all those folks were up in the [Cheyenne] Mountain on an exercise posture." He will add that "these are the same folks that we would bring up in case of contingencies or in time of going to war. So, in reality, I had all the guys up into the NORAD Battle Management Center that I needed to conduct the exercise as well as the contingency operations that happened on 9/11." (Doscher 9/8/2011)

NORAD Monitoring Russian Exercise - NORAD was created in 1958, during the Cold War, to protect North American airspace against nuclear attacks from the Soviet Union. (Shenon 4/25/2004; Canadian Broadcasting Corporation 8/6/2004; Dick 11/2004) According to the Toronto Star, “Whether it’s a simulation or a real-world event, the role of the [CMOC] is to fuse every critical piece of information NORAD has into a concise and crystalline snapshot.” (Simmie 12/9/2001) As well as the Vigilant Guardian exercise, NORAD is currently in the middle of an operation called Northern Vigilance, with its fighter jets deployed to Alaska and Northern Canada to monitor an exercise being run by the Russian Air Force (see September 9, 2001). (North American Aerospace Defense Command 9/9/2001) The battle staff members in Cheyenne Mountain are positioned to deal with both this operation and the exercise. (9/11 Commission 3/1/2004 )


Early Morning September 11, 2001: Langley Pilot Asks to Be Taken off Alert Later On

At Langley Air Force Base in Virginia, one of the pilots that will take off to defend Washington in response to the terrorist attacks (see (9:25 a.m.-9:30 a.m.) September 11, 2001) asks to be removed from “alert” status later this morning, so he and another pilot can participate in a training mission. (Sullivan 8/19/2002; Spencer 2008, pp. 116) Being on “alert” means that a pilot’s fighter jet is kept on the runway, armed, fueled up, and ready to take off within minutes if called upon. (Hebert 2/2002; Kelly 12/5/2003)

Pilot Requests 'Download' - The pilot, Major Dean Eckmann, calls NORAD’s Northeast Air Defense Sector (NEADS) and requests that he be removed from alert status at 11:00 a.m. He wants to be able to join in with a scheduled training mission being conducted from Langley Air Force Base, along with another pilot from his unit, Captain Craig Borgstrom. (Borgstrom is not one of the unit’s alert pilots, but will take off along with Eckmann in response to the terrorist attacks.) According to author Lynn Spencer, such requests for removal from alert status—known as “download”—are customary, “since the detachment typically flies two training missions each week, and as long as the other NORAD alert sites on the East Coast—at Otis [Air National Guard Base] on Cape Cod and Homestead [Air Reserve Base] in Florida—are up on alert, the requests are generally approved.” (Spencer 2008, pp. 116 and 141-144)

Alert Duty Usually Uneventful - The alert unit at Langley Air Force Base is in fact part of the North Dakota Air National Guard’s 119th Fighter Wing, which has a small detachment at Langley, located away from the base’s central facilities. The unit is housed in two cramped buildings, and has just four aircraft and 18 full-time members of staff. (Spencer 2008, pp. 114) According to journalist and author Jere Longman, being on alert duty is usually fairly uneventful for the pilots involved: “Protecting American airspace from attack was not a demanding job before September 11.... A week at Langley was a time to relax, watch television, work out, spend time on the computer, catch up on business. Like firemen, the pilots sat and waited for something to happen. When it did, they were usually scrambled to escort Navy jets with transponder problems to their home bases. Or to find doctors lost over the ocean in their Beechcraft Bonanzas. Or, occasionally, to sniff out drug runners. It was a sleepy job. Dozing for dollars, they called it.” (Longman 2002, pp. 64)

(Between 8:00 a.m. and 10:00 a.m.) September 11, 2001: Numerous Aircraft at Base near Washington Participating in Training Exercises

Many aircraft at Andrews Air Force Base, which is just a few miles outside Washington, DC, are taking part in training exercises. James Ampey, an FAA air traffic controller who is currently on duty in the control tower at the base, will later recall that there are “an unusually high number of aircraft taking off and landing at Andrews [this] morning, because previously scheduled military exercises [are] underway.” (9/11 Commission 7/28/2003 ) It is unclear what specific exercises these aircraft are participating in, and the exact time period Ampey is referring to.

Militarized 747 Involved in 'Global Guardian' Exercise - According to journalist and author Dan Verton, around the time of the Pentagon attack, “civilian and military officials [are] boarding a militarized version of a Boeing 747, known as the E-4B National Airborne Operations Center (NAOC), at an airfield outside of the nation’s capital. They [are] preparing to conduct a previously scheduled Defense Department exercise” (see (Shortly Before 9:37 a.m.) September 11, 2001). (Verton 2003, pp. 143-144)

This airfield could well be Andrews Air Force Base, which is just 10 miles from Washington. (GlobalSecurity (.org) 1/21/2006) The exercise being referred to is apparently the US Strategic Command's annual exercise, Global Guardian, for which three E-4Bs are reportedly launched (see 8:30 a.m. September 11, 2001 and Before 9:00 a.m. September 11, 2001). (Dejka 2/27/2002; Dejka 9/8/2002) Whether other aircraft that are taking off or landing at Andrews are participating in Global Guardian is unknown.

NORAD Exercise, 'Vigilant Guardian' - Another major exercise taking place this morning is called Vigilant Guardian. All of the North American Aerospace Defense Command (NORAD) is participating in it (see (6:30 a.m.) September 11, 2001). (Seely 1/25/2002; Scott 6/3/2002) However, Andrews is not one of NORAD's seven "alert" sites around the US. (McKenna 12/1999) And the 113th Wing of the District of Columbia Air National Guard, which is based at Andrews, is not part of the NORAD air defense force. (Scott 9/9/2002; Filson 2003, pp. 76) Furthermore, members of the 113th Wing have just returned from a major training exercise in Nevada (see Late August-September 8, 2001), and so, with only a few pilots and planes available, today is a "light flying day" for their unit. (9/11 Commission 3/11/2004) Presumably the 113th Wing is therefore not currently participating in Vigilant Guardian or any other major exercises.

Numerous Units at Andrews - There are, however, many units at Andrews that may be participating in exercises. Among more than 60 separate organizations located at the base are units from the Army, Navy, Marine Corps, Air Force Reserve, and Air National Guard. (DC Military (.com) 6/2001; GlobalSecurity (.org) 1/21/2006) These units include Marine Fighter Attack Squadron 321 (VMFA-321), which flies the F/A-18 Hornet fighter jet, and Naval Air Facility, Washington, DC, which has numerous aircraft available, including the F/A-18 Hornet. (DC Military (.com) 2/9/2001; DC Military (.com) 6/2001)

Andrews Units Respond to Attacks - DC Air National Guard fighters will later take off from Andrews to protect Washington in response to the morning's attacks (see (10:38 a.m.) September 11, 2001, 10:42 a.m. September 11, 2001, and 11:11 a.m. September 11, 2001). (Scott 9/9/2002) And a member of VMFA-321 calls NORAD's Northeast Air Defense Sector (NEADS) at around 9:50 a.m. to offer his unit's assistance in response to the attacks (see (9:50 a.m.) September 11, 2001). (Spencer 2008, pp. 188)

(8:00 a.m.) September 11, 2001: Computer Specialists in WTC for 'Emergency Drill'

An "emergency drill" has been scheduled for today, to take place on the 97th floor of the WTC South Tower. (Dwyer 3/31/2006; Dwyer 4/1/2006) A team of technology consultants from California is visiting investment firm Fiduciary Trust for this drill. (Fiduciary Trust has offices on the 97th floor.) (USA Today 9/13/2001; Dwyer and Flynn 2005, pp. 77; Dwyer 3/30/2006) No further details are reported as to what it entails, or who the technology consultants are. However, California-based software company Oracle Corp. will later report that six of its consultants were working on the 97th floor of the South Tower on 9/11 and are subsequently missing. So presumably these were the workers involved with the drill. (Cowley 9/13/2001; Associated Press 9/14/2001)

September 11, 2001: The 9/11 Attack: 3,000 Die in New York City and Washington, D.C.

The 9/11 attack: Four planes are hijacked, two crash into the WTC, one into the Pentagon, and one crashes into the Pennsylvania countryside. Nearly 3,000 people are killed.



The September 11, 2001 attacks. From left to right: The World Trade Center, Pentagon, and Flight 93 crash. [Source: unknown] (click image to enlarge)

(8:20 a.m.) September 11, 2001: NEADS Commander Marr and CONR Commander Arnold Discuss NORAD Training Exercise

Colonel Robert Marr, the battle commander at NORAD's Northeast Air Defense Sector (NEADS), speaks

over the phone with Major General Larry Arnold, the commander of the Continental United States NORAD Region (CONR), about the day's training exercise. Marr is in the battle cab at NEADS, in Rome, New York, while Arnold is at the CONR headquarters at Tyndall Air Force Base, Florida. (9/11 Commission 1/23/2004 [A](#); 9/11 Commission 2/2/2004 [A](#)) All of NORAD, including NEADS, is currently participating in the major annual exercise, Vigilant Guardian. (Northeast Air Defense Sector 8/23/2001; Arkin 2005, pp. 545; Doscher 9/8/2011) Marr has just been in a staff meeting, and now checks in with Arnold to make sure their communication lines are up and ready for the exercise. (Grant 2004, pp. 19) Marr tells Arnold that the personnel on the NEADS operations floor are ready to begin the exercise. Marr will tell the 9/11 Commission that his "primary communication" on this day "is to higher headquarters," presumably meaning Arnold. However, the two men are not on a continual open line. (9/11 Commission 1/23/2004 [A](#)) Arnold will tell the Commission that he and Marr "did not stay on the line continually, but spoke when information needed to be passed," throughout the day. (9/11 Commission 2/3/2004 [A](#))

8:30 a.m. September 11, 2001: US Military Holding 'Practice Armageddon' Nationwide Training Exercise



Offutt Air Force Base control tower during Global Guardian 1998.
[Source: Jeffery S. Viano]


As the 9/11 attacks are taking place, a large military training exercise called Global Guardian is said to be "in full swing." It has been going on since the previous week. (Dejka 2/27/2002; Buttry 9/10/2002) Global Guardian is an annual exercise sponsored by US Strategic Command (Stratcom) in cooperation with US Space Command and NORAD. One military author defines Stratcom as "the single US military command responsible for the day-to-day readiness of America's nuclear forces." (Arkin 2005, pp. 59)

Exercise Tests Military's Ability to Fight a Nuclear War - Global Guardian is a global readiness exercise involving all Stratcom forces and aims to test Stratcom's ability to fight a nuclear war. It is one of many "practice

Armageddons" that the US military routinely stages. (Arkin 11/1/1997; Ruff 2/21/2002; Dejka 2/27/2002; Buttry 9/10/2002) It links with a number of other military exercises, including Crown Vigilance (an Air Combat Command exercise), Apollo Guardian (a US Space Command exercise), and the NORAD exercises Vigilant Guardian and Amalgam Warrior. (US Department of Defense 5/1997; GlobalSecurity (.org) 4/27/2005) Global Guardian is both a command post and a field training exercise, and is based around a fictitious scenario designed to test the ability of Stratcom and its component forces to deter a military attack against the US. Hundreds of military personnel are involved. (US Congress n.d.; Wasiak 12/1999 [A](#); Villafuerte 9/8/2002) The exercise involves "a lot of the elements of what ultimately would be the nuclear command and control system in support of a national emergency," according to Admiral Richard Mies, the commander in chief of Stratcom. It includes an "exercise secretary of defense" and "an exercise president." Mies will say that because of the exercise, "A lot of [Stratcom's] command and control systems that, in peacetime, are normally not on alert were at a much, much higher state of alert [on September 11] and we had a number of aircraft, manned control aircraft that were airborne that were simulating their wartime roles." (Kelly 12/27/2011)

Exercise Normally Held in October or November - According to a 1998 Internet article by the British American Security Information Council—an independent research organization—Global Guardian is held in October or November each year. (Kristensen 10/1998) In his book *Code Names*, NBC News military analyst William Arkin dates this exercise for October 22-31, 2001. (Arkin 2005, pp. 379) And a military newspaper reported in March 2001 that Global Guardian was scheduled for October 2001. (Space Observer 3/23/2001, pp. 2 [A](#)) If this is correct, then some time after March, the exercise must have been rescheduled for early September.

Exercise Includes a 'Computer Network Attack' - Furthermore, a 1998 Defense Department newsletter reported that for several years Stratcom had been incorporating a computer network attack (CNA) into

Global Guardian. The attack involved Stratcom “red team” members and other organizations acting as enemy agents, and included attempts to penetrate the command using the Internet and a “bad” insider who had access to a key command and control system. The attackers “war dialed” the phones to tie them up and sent faxes to numerous fax machines throughout the Command. They also claimed they were able to shut down Stratcom’s systems. Reportedly, Stratcom planned to increase the level of computer network attack in future Global Guardian exercises. (Parker 6/1998 ) It is unclear if a computer network attack is incorporated into Global Guardian in 2001.

8:30 a.m. September 11, 2001: Firefighters Who Later Respond to Pentagon Attack Are Attending Antiterrorism Training

At the District of Columbia Fire and EMS Training Academy, firefighters are taking part in what is described as a “counterterrorism class” or “antiterrorism exercises.” This is in preparation for the annual meetings of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank, which are scheduled to take place in Washington, DC, at the end of this month. Numerous individuals who will later respond to the attack on the Pentagon are in attendance. These include some firefighters with the Metropolitan Washington Airports Authority (MWAA) at Reagan National Airport. (CBS News 9/17/2001; Goldberg et al. 2007, pp. 69 and 78) Captain Scott McKay of the Arlington County Fire Department (ACFD) is also reportedly “attending a counterterrorism class with the FBI in the District [of Columbia].” (Davis 9/20/2001) And other ACFD personnel are reportedly “engaged in meetings in the District of Columbia, preparing for the upcoming International Monetary Fund (IMF) conference.” (US Department of Health and Human Services 7/2002, pp. A4) FBI Special Agent Christopher Combs, who is the regular FBI liaison to the fire services and routinely cross-trains with regional departments, is at the Fire Academy, “training firefighters in counterterrorism tactics.” Combs serves on the FBI’s National Capital Response Squad (NCRS), an antiterrorism rapid response unit. (Goldberg et al. 2007, pp. 76) Members of the NCRS will be notified and recalled after the second WTC crash, and Combs will subsequently head to the Pentagon after hearing of the attack there, arriving at 9:49 a.m. (US Department of Health and Human Services 7/2002, pp. C45 and 1-1)


(8:30 a.m.-8:59 a.m.) September 11, 2001: Pilots at Otis Air Base Prepare for Training Mission, See Two ‘Alert’ Fighters Being Scrambled

A number of pilots with the 102nd Fighter Wing at Otis Air National Guard Base in Massachusetts are preparing to take off for a training mission and see two of their unit’s fighter jets being scrambled in response to the hijacked Flight 11, but they are not asked to respond to the emerging crisis themselves and continue with their preparations for the training mission. (102nd Fighter Wing 2001; Richard 2010, pp. 9-12)

Pilots Preparing for Training over the Atlantic - The pilots are preparing to fly a defensive counter-air mission in an area of military training airspace over the Atlantic Ocean, southeast of Long Island, known as “Whiskey 105.” (Richard 2010, pp. 10, 12; Roughton 9/3/2011) According to most accounts, six of the 102nd Fighter Wing’s F-15 fighters will be participating in the training mission. (102nd Fighter Wing 2001; North American Aerospace Defense Command 9/11/2001; Lehmert 9/11/2006; Spencer 2008, pp. 155) But Major Martin Richard, one of the pilots involved, will write in a 2010 book that eight of the unit’s F-15s take part in the mission. Richard will recall that after the coordination briefing for the training mission, he goes to the “life support shop” and puts on his flying gear, and then goes to the operations desk. There, the unit’s supervisor of flying, Lieutenant Colonel Jon Treacy, briefs the pilots preparing for the training mission on current weather and airfield updates, and gives them the status of a KC-135 tanker plane that will be refueling their fighters during the training mission. Richard then heads to his F-15, inspects it, and speaks to his crew chief.


Pilots Notice Commotion as Fighters Are Scrambled - As Richard starts his fighter’s engines, he notices a commotion on one side of the flight line ramp. He will recall: “The broken, disjointed communication over the ultra high frequency (UHF) radio indicated confusion. Members of the 102nd Security Forces Squadron, the cops, marshaled into protective positions. Two vehicles appeared with their blue emergency lights flashing. We all knew what was going on.” The 102nd Fighter Wing keeps a pair of F-15s on alert—armed, fueled up, and ready to take off within minutes of a scramble order—and, Richard will


recall, “[T]he alert aircraft were being scrambled.” (Richard 2010, pp. 10-11)

Pilots Watch Alert Fighters Take Off, but Unconcerned about This - The pilots preparing to take off for the training mission idle their engines and wait while the two alert fighters take off (see 8:46 a.m. September 11, 2001). (102nd Fighter Wing 2001) Richard will describe: “I watched from my jet as the clamshell doors on the alert hangars opened, heard the alert jets’ engines whine to life, and saw them aggressively emerge from the facility like an eager predator in search of its prey. Suddenly, the command post announced, ‘Scramble!’ They blasted off, shattering the previously still, calm, peaceful morning.” (Richard 2010, pp. 12) The pilots involved in the training mission are apparently unaware of why these fighters are being scrambled. (Lehmert 9/11/2006) Richard will recall: “I wasn’t too concerned when I saw the scrambled aircraft take off. We see many scrambles during the year and most all are just aircraft or vessels that can’t be identified but are friendly.” (102nd Fighter Wing 2001) Pilots Continue Preparing for Training - Once the two alert fighters are airborne, the pilots on the ground continue preparing for their training mission. “Back on the flight line,” Richard will recall, “I arranged my formation for takeoff and followed the standard procedures en route to our training area southwest of Martha’s Vineyard.” (Richard 2010, pp. 12) Richard and the other pilots will begin their training mission in Whiskey 105 (see (9:00 a.m.-9:24 a.m.) September 11, 2001). They will only learn of the first crash at the World Trade Center and be recalled to their base at around 9:25 a.m. (see (9:25 a.m.-9:45 a.m.) September 11, 2001), and some of them will take off again to help protect US airspace, but that will only be after the terrorist attacks have ended (see (10:30 a.m.) September 11, 2001 and (Shortly After 10:30 a.m.) September 11, 2001). (102nd Fighter Wing 2001; 9/11 Commission 10/14/2003 ; Spencer 2008, pp. 244-246)

Unit’s Mission Is to Protect Northeast US - The 102nd Fighter Wing at Otis Air Base, according to its own statement, has aircraft and their crews “on continuous 24-hour, 365-day alert to guard our skies.” The unit says its “mission is to protect the Northeast United States from armed attack from another nation, terrorist attack, and activities such as smuggling, illicit drug activity, and illegal immigration.” Its large area of responsibility includes “the major industrial centers of Boston, New York, Philadelphia, Detroit, and all national command centers in Washington, DC.” (Kinsella 9/12/2001) The 102nd Fighter Wing is equipped with 18 F-15 Eagles, including the two that are kept on alert. (Johnson 9/15/2001; Dennehy 9/21/2001)

8:30 a.m. September 11, 2001: Washington Police Unit Holding Training Event for Upcoming IMF and World Bank Meetings

A large training event is being held at the US Park Police Aviation Unit in preparation for the upcoming meetings of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank in Washington, DC, on September 29-30, and some of the participants will later be involved in the emergency response to the terrorist attacks. (International Monetary Fund 9/17/2001; Reuters 9/17/2001; Bohn 11/19/2001; McDonnell 2004, pp. 18-20 ) The Park Police Aviation Unit is located in Anacostia Park in southeast Washington, across the Potomac River from the Pentagon. (Wagstaff 10/1/2001; National Park Service 10/16/2004) Event Preparing for Possibly Violent Demonstrations - According to Sergeant Ronald Galey, a helicopter pilot with the aviation unit, because of the preparations taking place for the IMF and World Bank meetings, “it started out to be a little bit of an unusual day.” (Galey 11/20/2001) Sergeant Keith Bohn, another Park Police helicopter pilot, will later recall, “As fate would have it, we were having a large training event right out in front of the building here [the aviation hangar in Anacostia Park] for the upcoming IMF, the International Money Fund demonstrations.” Consequently, there are “horse-mounted officers, motorcycle officers, ground troops all training together to handle the movement of large groups of people.” (Bohn 11/19/2001) According to Galey, “[W]e all anticipated” the protest demonstrations at the IMF and World Bank meetings “to be very violent, very different than anything we’ve had in a long time.” (Galey 11/20/2001)

Helicopter Pilot Giving ‘Riot Training’ - Another of the aviation unit’s helicopter pilots, Sergeant Kenneth Burchell, is reportedly “conducting riot training... in preparation for the upcoming World Bank/International Monetary Fund protest demonstrations.” The riot training is being attended by 40 police officers belonging to an (unnamed) force other than the Park Police, along with some Department of Defense medical personnel. (McDonnell 2004, pp. 18-20 )

Medical Personnel Participating in Training - Personnel from the Casualty Care Research Center (CCRC)—a medical outfit from the Uniformed Services University of the Health Sciences (USUHS) in

Bethesda, Maryland—are attending the training event at the aviation unit. The CCRC provides medical support to law enforcement agencies and their “protectees” during emergencies. (Mientka 10/2001) One of these personnel, Jason Kepp, is reportedly teaching members of the Park Police “how to respond safely and effectively to the crowds of demonstrators expected to turn out at the upcoming meeting of the International Monetary Fund.” (USU Medicine 12/2002 [A](#))

Training Participants Involved in Response to Attacks - The Park Police Aviation Unit will be among the first agencies to respond to the Pentagon attack at 9:37 a.m. (see Shortly After 9:37 a.m. September 11, 2001). (Goldberg et al. 2007, pp. 161) Two medics from the USUHS who are attending the training event—Kepp and his colleague, Keith Kettell—will take off in the second Park Police helicopter to launch following the Pentagon attack, so as to assist in the emergency response. (USU Medicine 12/2002 [A](#); McDonnell 2004, pp. 20 [A](#)) In addition to members of their own force, Park Police commanders will deploy the 40 police officers attending the riot training at the aviation unit when the attacks occur. (McDonnell 2004, pp. 18 [A](#)) Members of firefighting agencies that later respond to the attack on the Pentagon are also involved in preparations for the upcoming IMF and World Bank meetings this morning (see 8:30 a.m. September 11, 2001 and 8:30 a.m. September 11, 2001). (US Department of Health and Human Services 7/2002, pp. A-4; Goldberg et al. 2007, pp. 69-70)

8:30 a.m. September 11, 2001: Army Base Near Pentagon Holds Terrorist Attack Exercise

At Fort Belvoir, an army base 12 miles south of the Pentagon, Lt. Col. Mark R. Lindon is conducting a “garrison control exercise” when the 9/11 attacks begin. The object of this exercise is to “test the security at the base in case of a terrorist attack.” Lindon later says, “I was out checking on the exercise and heard about the World Trade Center on my car radio. As soon as it was established that this was no accident, we went to a complete security mode.” Staff Sgt. Mark Williams of the Military District of Washington Engineer Company at Fort Belvoir also later says: “Ironically, we were conducting classes about rescue techniques when we were told of the planes hitting the World Trade Center.” Williams’ team is one of the first response groups to arrive at the site of the Pentagon crash and one of the first to enter the building following the attack. (Hagee 9/5/2002) A previous MASCAL (mass casualty) training exercise was held at Fort Belvoir a little over two months earlier (see June 29, 2001). It was “designed to enhance the first ready response in dealing with the effects of a terrorist incident involving an explosion.” (Passino 7/5/2001) Located at Fort Belvoir is Davison Army Airfield, from where UH-1 “Huey” and UH-60 Black Hawk helicopters fly. Davison’s mission includes maintaining “a readiness posture in support of contingency plans,” and providing “aviation support for the White House, US government officials, Department of Defense, Department of the Army, and other government agencies.” (Fahrig 5/7/1999; Military District of Washington 8/2000)

8:36 a.m. September 11, 2001: Fighters Launch from Base near Washington for Training Mission over North Carolina; Don’t Return until Attacks Ended

Three F-16 fighter jets take off from Andrews Air Force Base, which is 10 miles from Washington, DC, and fly to North Carolina for a routine training mission, meaning they will be about 200 miles away from base when the attacks in New York take place. (Scott 9/9/2002; 9/11 Commission 7/28/2003 [A](#); 9/11 Commission 2/17/2004; 9/11 Commission 2/27/2004) The jets belong to the 121st Fighter Squadron, part of the 113th Wing of the District of Columbia Air National Guard, which is based at Andrews. (District of Columbia Air National Guard 7/24/2001; Scott 9/9/2002; GlobalSecurity (.org) 8/21/2005) They are piloted by Major Billy Hutchison, Eric Haagenon, and Lou Campbell. Haagenon and Campbell are less experienced, junior pilots. Hutchison is flying with them because most of the pilots with his unit are on leave, having just returned from the “Red Flag” training exercise in Nevada (see Late August-September 8, 2001).

Jets Heading to Range to ‘Drop Some Bombs’ - The three F-16s are going to train for a surface attack. (9/11 Commission 2/27/2004; 9/11 Commission 3/11/2004 [A](#)) Hutchison will later recall: “We had gone up to [the gunnery range in] Dare County, North Carolina, to drop some bombs and hit a refueling tanker and come on back. It was going to be an uneventful day.” (Filson 2003, pp. 79) The range is located 207 miles from Andrews Air Force Base. (Scott 9/9/2002) The jets are scheduled to arrive back at Andrews at

10:45 a.m. (District of Columbia Air National Guard 9/11/2001)

September 11 a 'Light Flying Day' - Because members of the 113th Wing have just returned from the Red Flag exercise, September 11 is a “light flying day.” According to Major David McNulty, the senior intelligence officer of the 113th Wing, the unit would normally have launched eight jets—“an eight-ship”—for this training mission. But as only seven pilots and a few planes are available, a “three-ship” has been launched instead. (9/11 Commission 3/11/2004 🗨️) The three F-16s heading out for the training mission will not arrive back at Andrews until between 10:14 a.m. and 10:36 a.m., by which time the terrorist attacks will already be over (see 10:14 a.m. September 11, 2001 and (10:38 a.m.) September 11, 2001). (9/11 Commission 2/17/2004)

(8:38 a.m.) September 11, 2001: 'Hubbub' at NEADS Thought to Be Result of Exercise Scenario



National Guard troops stationed at NORAD's Northeast Air Defense Sector (NEADS) in Rome, New York. [Source: *Rome Sentinel*]

At NORAD's Northeast Air Defense Sector (NEADS), a huddle of people is gathered around one of the radar scopes. NEADS Commander Robert Marr initially thinks this hubbub is due to the NORAD training exercise (presumably Vigilant Guardian) that is taking place on this day (see (6:30 a.m.) September 11, 2001). He will later recall: “I've seen many exercises... and as I saw that huddle I said, ‘There's got to be something wrong, something is happening here.’ You usually see that whenever they find a track on the scope that looks unusual; it's usually an indicator that something is getting ready to kick off.” (Filson 2003, pp. 55) According to author Lynn Spencer, Marr thinks the day's exercise “is kicking off with a lively, unexpected twist....

His bet is that his simulations team has started off the exercise by throwing out a ‘heart attack card’ to see how the troops respond to a first-aid call from a fellow soldier, testing their first responder training.” (Spencer 2008, pp. 26) He sends Lieutenant Colonel Dawne Deskins, the regional mission crew commander for the exercise, to check out what is going on. (Filson 2003, pp. 55) Deskins speaks briefly over the phone with the FAA's Boston Center about the Flight 11 hijacking (see (8:37 a.m.) September 11, 2001). (Spencer 2008, pp. 26) She then runs back to the “battle cab”—the glass-walled room that overlooks the NEADS operations floor—and speaks to Marr with urgency in her voice. (Filson 2003, pp. 55) She tells him: “It's a hijacking, and this is real life, not part of the exercise. And it appears that the plane is heading toward New York City.” Although Deskins has specifically stated, “not part of the exercise,” Marr reportedly thinks, “This is an interesting start to the exercise.” According to Spencer, he thinks “This ‘real-world’ mixed in with today's simex [simulated exercise] will keep [his staff members] on their toes.” Regardless of whether the crisis is real or not, Marr decides to instruct that the two alert F-15s at Otis Air National Guard Base be ordered to battle stations (see (8:40 a.m.) September 11, 2001). (Spencer 2008, pp. 26-27)

(8:38 a.m.-8:43 a.m.) September 11, 2001: NORAD Personnel Mistake Hijacking for Part of an Exercise

When the FAA's Boston Center first contacts NORAD's Northeast Air Defense Sector (NEADS) to notify it of the hijacking of Flight 11 (see (8:37 a.m.) September 11, 2001), personnel there initially mistake the hijacking for a simulation as part of an exercise.

- Lieutenant Colonel Dawne Deskins, mission crew chief for the Vigilant Guardian exercise currently taking place (see (6:30 a.m.) September 11, 2001), will later say that initially she and everybody else at NEADS think the call from Boston Center is part of Vigilant Guardian. (Seely 1/25/2002) Although most of the personnel on the NEADS operations floor have no idea what the day's exercise is supposed to entail, most previous major NORAD exercises included a hijack scenario. (Komarow and Squitieri 4/18/2004; Cooper 8/5/2004) The day's exercise is in fact scheduled to include a simulated hijacking later on. (Bronner 8/1/2006)
- Major Kevin Nasypany, the NEADS mission crew commander, had helped design the day's exercise.



Major Kevin Nasypany.
[Source: CBC]

Thinking the reported hijacking is part of it, he actually says out loud, “The hijack’s not supposed to be for another hour.” (Bronner 8/1/2006)

- In the ID section, at the back right corner of the NEADS operations floor, technicians Stacia Rountree, Shelley Watson, and Maureen Dooley react to the news. Dooley, the leader of the ID section, tells the other members of her team: “We have a hijack going on. Get your checklists. The exercise is on” (see (8:38 a.m.) September 11, 2001). Rountree asks, “Is that real-world?” Dooley confirms, “Real-world hijack.” Watson says, “Cool!” (Bronner 8/1/2006; Spencer 2008, pp. 25)

- When NEADS Commander Robert Marr sees his personnel reacting to the news of the hijacking (see (8:38 a.m.) September 11, 2001), he reportedly thinks the day’s exercise “is kicking off with a lively, unexpected twist.” Even when a colleague informs him, “It’s a hijacking, and this is real life, not part of the exercise,” Marr thinks: “This is an interesting start to the exercise. This ‘real-world’ mixed in with today’s simex [simulated exercise] will keep [my staff members] on their toes.” (Spencer 2008, pp. 26)


- Major General Larry Arnold, who is at Tyndall Air Force Base, Florida, also later says that when he first hears of the hijacking, in the minutes after NEADS is alerted to it, “The first thing that went through my mind was, is this part of the exercise? Is this some kind of a screw-up?” (ABC News 9/11/2002; 9/11 Commission 5/23/2003) According to author Lynn Spencer: “Even as NORAD’s commander for the continental United States, Arnold is not privy to everything concerning the exercise. The simex is meant to test commanders also, to make sure that their war machine is operating as it should.” (Spencer 2008, pp. 38)

- At 8:43 a.m., Major James Fox, the leader of the NEADS weapons team, comments, “I’ve never seen so much real-world stuff happen during an exercise.” (Bronner 8/1/2006)


8:46 a.m.-9:37 a.m. September 11, 2001: Aviation Unit Based near Pentagon away for Weapons Training at Time of Attacks



Fort AP Hill. [Source: United States Army]

At the time of the attacks on the World Trade Center, members of the Army’s aviation support unit for the Washington, DC, area are away for weapons training, and do not set out to return to their base until after the time the Pentagon is hit. (Exempt 11/14/2001 ; Lilly 11/16/2001; Hipps 1/18/2002) The 12th Aviation Battalion is the Military District of Washington’s aviation support unit, and includes three helicopter companies. It operates UH-1 “Huey” and UH-60 Black Hawk helicopters. The battalion is stationed at Davison Army Airfield, which is at Fort Belvoir, 12 miles south of the Pentagon. (Military District of Washington 8/2000) Davison Airfield’s missions include maintaining “a readiness posture in support of contingency plans,” exercising

“operational control” of the Washington area airspace, and providing “aviation support for the White House, US government officials, Department of Defense, Department of the Army, and other government agencies.” (Fahrig 5/7/1999) A chief warrant officer with the 12th Aviation Battalion will later recall that members of the battalion are away this morning, at the shooting range at another Virginia Army base, Fort AP Hill, for their annual weapons training. They had set off early and driven there—a journey of one and a half to two hours. They are at the range when the attacks on the WTC take place, and only learn of them when the sister of one of their captains calls her brother with news of the attacks, presumably after seeing the coverage on television. The chief warrant officer will recall that, after hearing of the second attack on the WTC, “[W]e were all pretty much thinking we probably need to go—you know, probably need to come to work.” The range officer calls Davison Airfield and is told that the members of the battalion should “pack it in and come on back” to base. He is also told during the call that an aircraft has crashed into the Pentagon (see 9:37 a.m. September 11, 2001), meaning this call does not occur until after 9:37 a.m. According to the chief warrant officer, the Pentagon “is basically one of our missions. So we just pretty much packed up and came back up here and came into work.”

Exactly how many of the 12th Aviation Battalion's members are away from base for the weapons training is unstated, as is the exact time they arrive back at Davison Airfield. But considering it is one and a half to two hours drive between there and the range, they presumably do not get there until some time after about 11:15 a.m. When they do eventually get back to base, the battalion members will prepare to launch helicopters in response to the Pentagon attack (see (After 11:15 a.m.) September 11, 2001). (Exempt 11/14/2001 ; Hipps 1/18/2002)

8:46 a.m.-9:03 a.m. September 11, 2001: New Jersey Air National Guard Fighters away on Training Mission, Unaware of Attacks in New York

At the time of the attacks on the World Trade Center, two F-16 fighter jets are performing a training mission just eight minutes flying time away from New York, but the pilots are unaware of the crisis taking place. The two jets belong to the 177th Fighter Wing of the New Jersey Air National Guard, which is based at Atlantic City International Airport. (Kelly 12/5/2003; GlobalSecurity (.org) 8/21/2005) F-16s at Atlantic City are involved in scheduled training missions every day, and their first mission is usually between 8:30 a.m. and 9:00 a.m. (Griffin 2007, pp. 62) The two fighter jets are unarmed and performing practice bombing runs over a section of the Pine Barrens in New Jersey that is designated for military drills. The pilots are unaware of the attacks in New York. They will not be called back to base until shortly after the second WTC tower is hit, and will then have their training munitions replaced with live air-to-air missiles. At the time of the second attack, another two jets from the 177th FW are preparing to take off for routine bombing training, but they too have their mission canceled (see (Shortly After 9:03 a.m.) September 11, 2001). No jets will take off from Atlantic City in response to the attacks until after 9:37, when the Pentagon is hit. (Vocale 10/2002; Kelly 12/5/2003)

NEADS and FAA Tried Contacting 177th Fighter Wing - Colin Scoggins, the military liaison at the FAA's Boston Center, is aware that the 177th FW launches F-16s for training flights every morning around this time, and suggested to NORAD's Northeast Air Defense Sector (NEADS) that it contact Atlantic City to use these jets in response to the hijacked Flight 11. However, when NEADS tried phoning the unit, its call was not answered (see (Between 8:40 a.m. and 8:46 a.m.) September 11, 2001). (Griffin 2007, pp. 62; Spencer 2008, pp. 33-34) Apparently around 8:34 a.m., the Boston Center also attempted to contact the Atlantic City unit, but the outcome of that call is unclear (see (8:34 a.m.) September 11, 2001). (9/11 Commission 7/24/2004, pp. 20)

F-16s Might Have Prevented Attacks on WTC - Author Peter Lance will later point out that, had the two Atlantic City F-16s flying over the Pine Barrens "been notified by the FAA at 8:34... they could have reached the Twin Towers by 8:42 a.m.," four minutes before Flight 11 hit the North Tower (see 8:46 a.m. September 11, 2001). "Even unarmed, and without a shutdown order, they might have been able to take defensive action to prevent the big 767 from crashing into the tower. In any case, the fighters would certainly have been on patrol and able to interdict UA 175, which didn't hit the South Tower until 9:03 a.m." (Lance 2004, pp. 230-231) Yet despite the crucial role these two fighters could have played, the 9/11 Commission Report will make no mention of them. (9/11 Commission 7/24/2004) Pointing out the irony of having the two F-16s so near to Manhattan yet with such an unrelated mission, 177th Fighter Wing public affairs officer Lt. Luz Aponte will later remark, "Isn't that something?" (Kelly 12/5/2003)

8:48 a.m. September 11, 2001: Barksdale Air Force Base, Louisiana, Participating in Global Guardian Exercise

Personnel and aircraft at Barksdale Air Force Base in Louisiana are participating in the US Strategic Command (Stratcom) exercise Global Guardian (see 8:30 a.m. September 11, 2001). (Villafuerte 9/8/2002) The exercise is based around the scenario of a rogue nation attacking the United States with nuclear weapons. At Barksdale, according to journalists Eric Schmitt and Thom Shanker, air crews taking part in the exercise have been "pulling nuclear bombs and missiles out of their heavily guarded storage sites and loading them aboard B-52s" this morning. Real, live nuclear weapons are being used, but "their triggers [are] not armed." (Schmitt and Shanker 2011, pp. 22) Colonel Mike Reese, director of staff for the 8th Air Force, is monitoring several television screens at the base as part of the exercise when he sees CNN cut into coverage of the first World Trade Center crash, two minutes after it happens. He watches live when the second plane hits the WTC at 9:03 a.m. Reese will later recall that at this point,

“[W]e knew it wasn’t a mistake. Something grave was happening that put the nation’s security at risk.” An article in the New Orleans Times-Picayune will describe how awareness of the real attacks impacts those participating in the exercise: “Immediately [the Barksdale staff’s] focus turned to defense, securing Barksdale, Minot [North Dakota], and Whiteman [Missouri] air force bases, where dozens of aircraft and hundreds of personnel were involved in the readiness exercise ‘Global Guardian.’ The exercise abruptly ended as the United States appeared to be at war within its own borders. Four A-10s, an aircraft not designed for air-to-air combat, from Barksdale’s 47th Fighter Squadron, were placed on ‘cockpit alert,’ the highest state of readiness for fighter pilots. Within five minutes, the A-10s, equipped only with high intensity cannons, could have been launched to destroy unfriendly aircraft, even if it was a civilian passenger airliner.” Lieutenant Colonel Edmund Walker, commander of the 47th Fighter Squadron, and a novice pilot still in training are sitting in their jets, ready to take off, when they are ordered back to the squadron office. They are told they are no longer practicing. Walker will recall: “We had to defend the base against any aircraft, airliner or civilian. We had no idea. Would it fly to the base and crash into the B-52s or A-10s on the flight line?” (Villafuerte 9/8/2002) When Air Force One with President Bush on Board takes off from Sarasota, Florida, at around 9:55 a.m. (see 9:54 a.m. September 11, 2001), it will initially have no no fixed destination. But after a short time, it will begin heading toward Barksdale Air Force Base and land there at 11:45 a.m. (see 11:45 a.m. September 11, 2001). (9/11 Commission 7/24/2004, pp. 39, 325)

8:48 a.m. September 11, 2001: Office of Emergency Management Preparing for Bioterrorism Exercise; Opens Its Command Center



John Odermatt [Source: Queens Gazette]


New York City’s Office of Emergency Management (OEM) is responsible for coordinating the city’s response to major incidents, including terrorist attacks. (9/11 Commission 7/24/2004, pp. 283-284) Its offices are in Building 7 of the World Trade Center. Today is reportedly “going to be a busy day at the OEM,” as staff members have come to work early to prepare for Tripod, a major biological-terrorism training exercise scheduled for September 12 (see September 12, 2001). Their building shakes when the North Tower is hit at 8:46 a.m. OEM Commissioner John Odermatt initially believes a freak accident has occurred involving a ground-to-air missile, but soon after, OEM is informed that a plane hit the North Tower. Immediately, OEM staff members begin to activate their emergency command center, located on the 23rd floor of WTC 7 (see June 8, 1999). (Jenkins and Edwards-Winslow 9/2003, pp. 15) They call agencies such



as the New York fire and police departments, and the Department of Health, and direct them to send their designated representatives to the OEM. They also call the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) and request at least five federal Urban Search and Rescue Teams. (9/11 Commission 7/24/2004, pp. 293) According to the 9/11 Commission, OEM’s command center will be evacuated at 9:30 a.m. due to reports of further unaccounted for planes (see (9:30 a.m.) September 11, 2001). By that time, none of the outside agency liaisons will have arrived. (9/11 Commission 7/24/2004, pp. 305) Other accounts indicate the command center may be evacuated earlier, possibly even before the second tower is hit (see (Soon After 8:46 a.m.-9:35 a.m.) September 11, 2001 and (Shortly Before 9:03 a.m.) September 11, 2001).

Before 9:00 a.m. September 11, 2001: Offutt Air Force Base in Nebraska Is Directing Global Guardian Training Exercise



Offutt Air Force Base, near Omaha, Nebraska, appears to be the headquarters of the US Strategic Command (Stratcom) exercise Global Guardian that is “in full swing” when the 9/11 attacks begin (see 8:30 a.m. September 11, 2001). At least the director of the exercise, Admiral Richard Mies, commander in chief of Stratcom, is at Offutt this morning. Because of Global Guardian, bombers, missile crews, and submarines around America are all being directed from Stratcom’s command center, a steel and concrete reinforced bunker below Offutt. (Arkin 11/12/1997; Ruff 2/21/2002; Dejka 2/27/2002; BBC 9/1/2002; Buttry 9/10/2002) This bunker is staffed with top personnel and they are at a heightened security



mode because of the exercise. (Ruff 2/21/2002; Bjorkman 7/2002  Admiral Richard Mies. [Source: Public domain]

'Doomsday' Planes Airborne for Exercise - Because of Global Guardian, three special military command aircraft with sophisticated communications equipment, based at Offutt, are up in the air this morning. These E-4B National Airborne Operations Center planes—nicknamed “Doomsday” planes during the Cold War—are intended to control nuclear forces from the air in times of crisis. They are capable of acting as alternative command posts for top government officials from where they can direct US forces, execute war orders and coordinate the actions of civil authorities in times of national emergency. The federal advisory committee (whose chairman is retired Lieutenant General Brent Scowcroft) is aboard one of these Doomsday planes, being brought to Offutt to observe the exercise. Global Guardian will reportedly be put on pause at 9:11 a.m. (see 9:11 a.m. September 11, 2001), but not formally terminated until 10:44 a.m. (see (10:44 a.m.) September 11, 2001), and the battle staff at Offutt will switch to “real-world mode” once the attacks are apparent. However, even after Global Guardian is called off, the three E-4Bs will remain airborne. Also this morning, a small group of business leaders are at Offutt because of a charity fundraiser event due to take place later in the day, hosted by the multi-billionaire Warren Buffett (see (8:45 a.m.-9:03 a.m.) September 11, 2001). (Dejka 2/27/2002; Bjorkman 7/2002 ; BBC 9/1/2002; Dejka 9/8/2002; Bombardier 9/8/2006 

Before 9:00 a.m. September 11, 2001: Army Base Outside New York Prepares for Terrorist Attack Exercise

Staff at Fort Monmouth, an Army base in New Jersey located about 50 miles south of New York City, is preparing to hold a “disaster drill” to test emergency response capabilities to a fake chemical attack. The exercise, called Timely Alert II, is to involve various law enforcement agencies and emergency personnel, including Fort Monmouth firefighters and members of the New Jersey State Police. Personnel are to be deployed and measures taken as in a real emergency. A notice has been sent out, warning that anyone not conducting official business will be turned away from Fort Monmouth during the exercise. Soon after 9 a.m., the exercise director tells a group of participating volunteers that a hijacked plane has crashed into the World Trade Center. The participants pretend to be upset, believing this is just part of the simulation. When they see the live televised footage of the WTC attacks, some people at the base think it is an elaborate training video to accompany the exercise. One worker tells a fire department training officer: “You really outdid yourself this time.” Interestingly, the follow-up exercise held in July 2002 (Timely Alert III) does incorporate simulated television news reports to give participants the impression that the emergency is real. And in the first Timely Alert exercise, held on the base in January 2001, a call had come through of a supposed “real” bomb situation, but this “fortunately turned out to be a report related to a training aid being used during the exercise.” On 9/11, Fort Monmouth is geared to go into high-alert status as part of Timely Alert II. The exercise is called off once the base is alerted to the real attacks. (Monmouth Message 2/9/2001; Conohan 9/21/2001; Sheehan 9/21/2001; Harnes 7/24/2002; Sheehan 8/23/2002; US Department of the Army 7/26/2003 ; Foster 9/12/2003) Fort Monmouth is home to various Army, Defense Department, and other government agencies. The largest of these is the US Army’s Communications-Electronics Command (CECOM). CECOM serves to “develop, acquire, field, and sustain superior information technologies and integrated systems for America’s warfighters.” It is tasked with the “critical role of command, control, communications, computers, intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance (C4ISR).” (Communications-Electronics Command 4/17/2002; US Department of the Army 1/2003 ; GlobalSecurity (.org) 2/12/2006) Fort Monmouth services also directly assist in the emergency response later in the day. Its fire department deploys to Atlantic Highlands to assist passengers coming from Manhattan by ferry, and members of its Patterson Army Health Clinic are also sent out to help. Teams of CECOM experts from the base are later deployed to ground zero in New York with equipment capable of locating cellular phone transmissions within the ruins of the collapsed World Trade Center. Its explosive ordnance company is also deployed to assist authorities should they come across anything they think might be explosives, while digging through the debris in search of victims. (Conohan 9/21/2001; Sheehan 9/21/2001)

(9:00 a.m.) September 11, 2001: Tanker Plane from Maine Flying South along East Coast for Training Mission

A KC-135 tanker plane from Bangor, Maine, is flying south for a training mission at the time the terrorist

attacks begin. The aircraft, which has the call sign “Maine 92,” is one of the eight KC-135s that are attached to the 101st Air Refueling Wing, based at Bangor International Airport. It is “heading south and was off the coast of North Carolina on the morning of 9/11,” the Bangor Daily News will later report. Details of the training mission it is involved with are unknown. The KC-135 will have already turned toward home and be heading north back to Bangor when the FAA “began shutting down all of the country’s airports and ordering planes to land,” according to the Bangor Daily News. (North American Aerospace Defense Command 9/11/2001; Cohen 9/13/2001; Ricker 9/9/2011) (This is presumably a reference to the FAA’s 9:45 a.m. order that all airborne aircraft must land at the nearest airport (see (9:45 a.m.) September 11, 2001). (US Congress. House. Committee On Transportation And Infrastructure 9/21/2001; 9/11 Commission 7/24/2004, pp. 29)) The KC-135’s crew members will contact NORAD’s Northeast Air Defense Sector (NEADS) and offer their assistance. The aircraft, which is carrying about 22,000 gallons of fuel, will then be sent to New Jersey to refuel a KC-10 tanker plane that is providing fuel to fighter jets patrolling the Eastern Seaboard. Another of the 101st Air Refueling Wing’s KC-135s, with the call sign “Maine 85,” is also airborne at the time of the terrorist attacks, on its way to a training mission off the coast of Long Island, New York (see 9:04 a.m.-9:06 a.m. September 11, 2001). (Ricker 9/9/2011)

(9:00 a.m.) September 11, 2001: Northern Vigilance Operation Canceled; False Blips Reportedly Purged from NORAD Radar Screens



A soldier monitors a NORAD radar screen.
[Source: National War College]

NORAD has had fighter jets deployed to Alaska and Northern Canada for the past two days. They are there for a real-world maneuver called Operation Northern Vigilance, tasked with monitoring a Russian air force exercise being conducted in the Russian Arctic all this week (see September 9, 2001). (North American Aerospace Defense Command 9/9/2001) At its operations center deep inside Cheyenne Mountain, Colorado, NORAD is also reportedly at “full ‘battle staff’ levels for a major annual exercise that tests every facet of the organization.” The operations center is now contacted by NORAD’s Northeast Air Defense Sector (NEADS), based in Rome, New York. NEADS says the FAA believes there is a hijacking in progress and is asking

NORAD for support; this is not part of the exercise. As the Toronto Star will later report: “In a flash, Operation Northern Vigilance is called off. Any simulated information, what’s known as an ‘inject,’ is purged from the screens.” (Simmie 12/9/2001) NORAD has the capacity to inject simulated material, including mass attacks, during exercises, “as though it was being sensed for the first time by a radar site.” (US Department of Defense 1/15/1999) However, Northern Vigilance is a military operation, not a training exercise. (North American Aerospace Defense Command 9/9/2001; US Congress 3/11/2005) So presumably the “simulated information” is part of a NORAD exercise currently taking place, such as Vigilant Guardian (see (6:30 a.m.) September 11, 2001). Therefore, many minutes into the real 9/11 attacks, there may be false radar blips appearing on the screens of NORAD personnel. Additional details, such as whose radar screens have false blips and over what duration, are unclear. However, while the Toronto Star will indicate that the simulated material is removed from NORAD radar screens shortly before 9:03 a.m., when the second attack on the World Trade Center takes place, at 10:12 a.m. an officer at the operations center will call NEADS and ask it to “terminate all exercise inputs coming into Cheyenne Mountain” (see 10:12 a.m. September 11, 2001). (North American Aerospace Defense Command 9/11/2001; Simmie 12/9/2001) This would indicate that the NORAD operations center continues receiving simulated radar information for over an hour more, until after Flight 93 has crashed (see (10:06 a.m.) September 11, 2001) and the terrorist attacks have ended. The Russians, after seeing the attacks on New York and Washington on television, will quickly communicate that they are canceling their Russian Arctic exercise. (Simmie 12/9/2001; Alberts 10/19/2002)

9:00 a.m. September 11, 2001: Meeting Set to Be Held at Pentagon about ‘Disaster Exercise’ at Nearby Military Building



The Navy Annex in Arlington, Virginia. [Source: Gary R. Copping / US Air Force]

A meeting is scheduled to take place at the Pentagon, regarding a planned “tabletop disaster exercise” at the nearby Navy Annex building. (Alexander 11/5/2001; Alexander 12/21/2001) This is according to Coneleous Alexander, a building manager at the Navy Annex, which is located a few hundred yards uphill from the Pentagon. (Garamone 9/24/2001; Goldberg et al. 2007, pp. 14, 169) Alexander will say that he and his colleagues have been getting ready for “Fire Awareness Month,” which is this coming October, and are planning a “tabletop disaster

exercise for the Navy Annex.” As a result, Alexander is due to be at the Pentagon at 9:00 a.m. today. It is unclear whether an exercise is actually set to take place at the Pentagon or just a meeting to discuss a forthcoming exercise at the Navy Annex. In one interview, Alexander will say he is scheduled to go to the fifth floor of the Pentagon for “a meeting... to discuss doing a tabletop exercise at the Navy Annex.” But in another interview, he will say he is scheduled to go to the Pentagon “for a tabletop exercise for a disaster response for the building.” (Presumably “the building” he refers to is the Navy Annex.) However, there has been a water main break in the Navy Annex. Alexander therefore sends a colleague, Craig Bryan, to the meeting in his place, so he can stay at the Navy Annex to “handle the water main break and other things going on” there. Whether the meeting goes ahead, in light of the attacks in New York, is unstated. (Alexander 11/5/2001; Alexander 12/21/2001)

(9:00 a.m.-10:00 a.m.) September 11, 2001: Coast Guard Holds Exercise near President’s Location in Florida, Based on Possible Terrorist Attack



The Coast Guard cutter 'Joshua Appleby.' [Source: Harry Craft III / US Coast Guard]

The US Coast Guard is running a “mass casualty exercise” based around the scenario of an explosion, possibly caused by terrorists, on a cruise ship in Tampa Bay, Florida, which is about 50 miles north of Sarasota, where President Bush is visiting an elementary school this morning. (Tampa Bay Regional Planning Council HazMatters 10/2001 [A](#); Plunket 1/13/2002; Adair and Hegarty 9/8/2002; Local Red Cross News 9/11/2008) The exercise is being conducted by the Coast Guard’s Marine Safety Office in Tampa, in conjunction with Carnival Cruise Lines, Hillsborough County, and the City of Tampa. (Tampa Bay Regional Planning Council HazMatters 10/2001 [A](#)) The Tampa

Bay chapter of the Red Cross and the local fire department are also involved, and more than 100 volunteers are participating. (Local Red Cross News 9/11/2008; Merrill 2011, pp. 253)

Exercise Involves 'Possibly Terrorist-Related' Explosion on Ship - The exercise is based on the scenario of an explosion occurring in the engine room of a cruise ship that has 3,500 people on board, just after the ship has passed under the Sunshine Skyway Bridge into Tampa Bay. The explosion is “possibly terrorist-related,” according to Steve McGuire, a Red Cross volunteer who is participating in the exercise. The ship is anchored just south of MacDill Air Force Base, and then a boat, the Coast Guard cutter *Joshua Appleby*, brings out firefighters and equipment to tackle the fire. Helicopters are used to evacuate the mock casualties from the ship. The casualties are taken away for simulated triage and transportation to area hospitals. The exercise is “a very elaborate drill,” according to McGuire. (Tampa Bay Regional Planning Council HazMatters 10/2001 [A](#); Local Red Cross News 9/11/2008)

Exercise Possibly Continues until 10:00 a.m. - As the exercise is about to begin, Janet McGuire, the public affairs and marketing director with the Tampa Bay chapter of the Red Cross, is called by her husband, Bernard McGuire, who tells her a plane has crashed into the World Trade Center. Minutes later, he calls again and tells his wife that a second plane has hit the WTC. She immediately calls the director at her agency’s disaster operations center and requests that the exercise be canceled. Author Will Merrill will later comment, “People might think that Tampa was also under attack if they suddenly saw fire trucks, ambulances, and police cars congregating downtown” because of the exercise. (Park 9/13/2006; Merrill 2011, pp. 253) However, according to Steve McGuire, the exercise continues until “about 9:30 or 10 a.m.” (Local Red Cross News 9/11/2008) If correct, this would mean it likely continues

until after Bush is driven away from the elementary school in Sarasota, at around 9:35 a.m. (see (9:34 a.m.) September 11, 2001), and is possibly still taking place when Bush takes off from the Sarasota airport on Air Force One, at around 9:55 a.m. (see 9:54 a.m. September 11, 2001). (Sanger and van Natta 9/16/2001; Langley 12/16/2001; Martin 7/4/2004)

9:00 a.m. September 11, 2001: 9/11-Style Simulation Set to Commence at Agency near Pentagon



John Fulton. [Source: NLESI]

A training exercise is scheduled to begin at a US intelligence agency located just over 20 miles from the Pentagon, based around the scenario of a small corporate jet plane experiencing a mechanical failure and crashing into a tower building there. The exercise, which has been planned for several months, is to take place at the headquarters of the National Reconnaissance Office (NRO) in Chantilly, Virginia, four miles away from Washington Dulles International Airport and 24 miles from the Pentagon. (Lumpkin 8/21/2002; Hess 8/22/2002) Its purpose is to test the agency's employees' ability to respond to a small aircraft crash. (Lumpkin 8/21/2002; 9/11 Commission 7/14/2003)

Simulated Plane Crash - The exercise is set to commence at 9:00 a.m., when its observers meet to be briefed. The observers and exercise role players are to move to their positions for the exercise 10 to 15 minutes later. The plane

in the exercise scenario is a Learjet 35A with two pilots and four passengers on board, which takes off at 9:30 a.m. from Dulles Airport. (9/11 Commission 7/14/2003) This is the airport Flight 77, which crashes into the Pentagon at 9:37 a.m., took off from earlier in the morning (see (8:20 a.m.) September 11, 2001). (9/11 Commission 7/24/2004, pp. 8-10) A minute after taking off, the Learjet is supposed to experience a mechanical failure. It then goes out of control, leading it to crash into one of the four towers at the NRO's headquarters at around 9:32 a.m. (see 9:30 a.m.-10:30 a.m. September 11, 2001). No real plane is going to be used in the exercise, but some stairwells and exits at the NRO headquarters are to be closed off in order to simulate the damage from the crash, forcing employees to find other ways to evacuate the building. (Lumpkin 8/21/2002; 9/11 Commission 7/14/2003)

Scenario Created by War Gaming Division - The exercise scenario was imagined by the NRO's internal war gaming division. (Hess 8/22/2002) The exercise is being run by John Fulton, the chief of this division, and his team at the CIA. (National Law Enforcement and Security Institute 8/4/2002; National Law Enforcement and Security Institute 8/6/2002)

Highly Secretive Agency - The NRO is an agency of the US Department of Defense. Its mission is "to ensure that the US has the technology and spaceborne and airborne assets needed to acquire intelligence worldwide." (US Department of Defense 9/18/1992) It operates many of the nation's spy satellites. (Lumpkin 8/21/2002) According to the New York Times, "It designs, builds, and operates spy satellites that photograph and overhear what other countries are up to." (New York Times 8/10/1994) The NRO employs some 3,000 people. These employees are drawn from the CIA and the military. (Lumpkin 8/21/2002) The New York Times has called the NRO "probably the most secretive of the intelligence agencies." Until 1992, its existence was not even officially disclosed. (New York Times 8/10/1994)

Exercise Canceled - According to NRO spokesman Art Haubold, the exercise will be called off "as soon as real world events began to unfold." However, he does not give a specific time. All but the NRO's most essential employees will then be sent home. (Hess 8/22/2002) Haubold will later comment, "It was just an incredible coincidence" that the exercise scenario "happened to involve an aircraft crashing into our facility." (Lumpkin 8/21/2002)

(9:00 a.m.) September 11, 2001: United Airlines Chief Assures Employees that Crisis Is 'Not a Drill'



The United

When he arrives at the United Airlines System Operations Control (SOC) center, United's chief operating officer Andy Studdert has to reassure employees that the unfolding crisis is not a training exercise. (Chicago Tribune 7/16/2003) Shortly before 9:00 a.m., Studdert had been in a meeting at the United Airlines headquarters, outside Chicago, with United's CEO Jim

Airlines
System
Operations
Control
center.
[Source:
United
Airlines]

Goodwin. His secretary had rushed in and told him about the first plane hitting the World Trade Center. Studdert immediately got up and ran across to the SOC, located next to the headquarters building. (Mccartney and Carey 10/15/2001; 9/11 Commission 1/27/2004) However, ten days previously, he had surprised the staff there with a crisis-training exercise, where he'd told them a flight over the Pacific had broken radio contact and suffered a potentially disastrous engine failure. For 30 minutes, the staff had believed the story, before he told them the truth. So when he arrives at the SOC at around 9:00 a.m., the Chicago

Tribune will report, Studdert senses disbelief among his employees at the real-world crisis. He therefore shouts out to reassure them, "This is not a drill!" According to USA Today, the staff already realizes this. (Levin, Adams, and Morrison 8/13/2002; Chicago Tribune 7/16/2003; 9/11 Commission 1/27/2004)

9:00 a.m. September 11, 2001: Commander at Barksdale Air Base Thinks First Crash Is an Exercise Simulation



Thomas Keck. [Source: US Air Force]

When Lieutenant General Thomas Keck, the commander of the 8th Air Force at Barksdale Air Force Base in Louisiana, is told that a plane has crashed into the World Trade Center, he mistakenly thinks this is a simulated scenario as part of a training exercise. (2d Bomb Wing 6/30/2002, pp. 40 [A](#); Freeman 10/2006 [A](#)) Barksdale is one of a number of Air Force bases where aircraft and personnel are currently participating in the exercise Global Guardian (see 8:48 a.m. September 11, 2001). (Villafruerte 9/8/2002) This annual exercise is run by the US Strategic Command (Stratcom) and aims to test the command's ability to fight a nuclear war (see 8:30 a.m. September 11, 2001). (Arkin 11/1/1997; Dejka 2/27/2002; Dejka 9/8/2002; GlobalSecurity (.org) 4/27/2005)

Keck Thinks Crash Is a 'Scenario Injection' - Keck is sitting in a windowless command center at Barksdale, monitoring the base's participation in Global Guardian. Ground crews are practicing getting a fleet of B-52 bombers fueled, armed, and ready to get airborne for bombing runs. Keck watches on a monitor as, at exactly 9:00 a.m., an alarm sounds across the base and the

crews rush to their planes. Then a younger officer taps him on the shoulder and tells him, "Sir, we just had an aircraft hit the World Trade Center." Keck mistakenly thinks the officer is describing a simulated crisis that is being included in the exercise. He says: "That's not the way you interject a situation into a training exercise! When you have a scenario injection, you say, 'Sir, this is an exercise input,' and then you give me the information." But the younger officer replies, "No, sir," and points at a television showing CNN, which is broadcasting live coverage of the burning WTC in New York.

Keck Thinks First Crash Is an Accident - Keck's initial thought upon seeing the TV coverage is reportedly, "How could such a terrible accident happen?" It is only when Keck sees the second plane hitting the WTC at 9:03 a.m. that he will realize the US is under attack. He then yells to his staff, "Lock it down," thereby signaling that the exercise is over. (Freeman 10/2006 [A](#)) (However, according to an article in The Bombardier, the newspaper for Barksdale Air Force Base, Stratcom will put Global Guardian on pause at 9:11 a.m. (see 9:11 a.m. September 11, 2001), but only terminate the exercise at 10:44 a.m. (see (10:44 a.m.) September 11, 2001). (Bombardier 9/8/2006 [A](#))) After seeing the second crash, Keck will leave the command center from where he has been monitoring the exercise and go to the 8th Air Force battle staff, to be briefed on reports coming from Air Force headquarters about the ongoing terrorist attacks. He will later on accompany President Bush while he is at Barksdale, after landing there on Air Force One at about 11:45 a.m. (see 11:45 a.m. September 11, 2001). (Freeman 10/2006 [A](#))

(9:00 a.m.-9:24 a.m.) September 11, 2001: Fighters Take Off from Otis Air Base and Begin Training Mission, Unaware of Hijackings and WTC Crashes

Several F-15 fighter jets from Otis Air National Guard Base in Massachusetts fly out over the Atlantic Ocean for a scheduled training mission, but the pilots are unaware of the hijackings taking place and the plane crashes at the World Trade Center. The fighters belong to the 102nd Fighter Wing. (102nd Fighter Wing 2001; Roughton 9/3/2011) Their mission is an "ordinary training session," according to the Cape



Martin Richard. [Source: Kevin Mingora]

Cod Times. (Lehmert 9/11/2006) Major Martin Richard, one of the pilots involved, will describe it as a “normal training mission.” (Richard 2010, pp. 9) It is being carried out in “Whiskey 105,” an area of military training airspace over the Atlantic Ocean, southeast of Long Island. (102nd Fighter Wing 2001; Roughton 9/3/2011) According to most accounts, six of the 102nd Fighter Wing’s F-15s are taking part. (102nd Fighter Wing 2001; North American Aerospace Defense Command 9/11/2001; Lehmert 9/11/2006; Spencer 2008, pp. 155) But Richard will write in a 2010 book that eight of the unit’s F-15s are involved.

Training Mission Is a 'Mock War Scenario' - The “defensive counter-air” mission, according to Richard, is intended to have the fighters splitting into two teams: the “blue air”—the “good guys”—versus the “red air,” their adversaries. In a defensive counter-air mission, Richard will write, “the goal is [to] protect a point on the ground. Our training objective focused on ensuring flawless radar operations to be able to build an accurate picture of the threat’s formation, target the threat in the most effective manner, and

ensure, through mutual support, that all blue air forces returned unscathed.” The “mock war scenario” that is played out is “an exciting sortie to do as a practice mission, and it took a great deal of organization to make happen,” according to Richard. (Richard 2010, pp. 10) A KC-135 tanker plane from the 101st Air Refueling Wing in Bangor, Maine, is scheduled to refuel the fighters during the mission. (102nd Fighter Wing 2001; Spencer 2008, pp. 153; Ricker 9/9/2011)

Pilot Hears Unusual Radio Communications - The fighters take off from Otis Air Base at 9:00 a.m. (9/11 Commission 10/14/2003 [↗](#)) They then fly out toward the Whiskey 105 training airspace. (102nd Fighter Wing 2001; Roughton 9/3/2011) Richard will recall that at this time, “[e]verything was exceedingly normal until we heard some unfamiliar radio communication between [the FAA’s] Boston Center and some civilian airliners.” He will say that this “got my attention, but more because it was out of the norm, not because it was especially noteworthy.”

Fighters Fly to Opposite Sides of Airspace - Richard commands the other fighter pilots to complete their pre-mission safety checks and then readies them “for the simulated war we had planned hours before.” After entering Whiskey 105, the fighters carry out a warm-up maneuver. Richard then sends the fighters simulating the “red air” to the west side of the training airspace, while the other fighters—the “blue air”—take up their position about 80 miles away, on the east side of the airspace. (Richard 2010, pp. 12-13) But then, shortly after they arrive in Whiskey 105, at around 9:25 a.m., the pilots will learn of the first crash at the WTC and be recalled to their base (see (9:25 a.m.-9:45 a.m.) September 11, 2001). Some of the fighters subsequently take off again to help protect US airspace, but that will be after the terrorist attacks have ended (see (10:30 a.m.) September 11, 2001 and (Shortly After 10:30 a.m.) September 11, 2001). (102nd Fighter Wing 2001; 9/11 Commission 10/14/2003 [↗](#); Lehmert 9/11/2006; Spencer 2008, pp. 244-246; Richard 2010, pp. 13)

Fighters on Training Are Unarmed - The fighters involved in the training mission have no ordnance on them. (102nd Fighter Wing 2001) According to Technical Sergeant Michael Kelly, the full-time technician in the command post at Otis Air Base, they are “in an exercise configuration” and therefore “at a ‘safe guns’ (non-firing) weapons posture.” Furthermore, the fighters “more than likely had only one fuel tank.” (F-15s can carry three fuel tanks.) If these fighters were to be used for “long air superiority/sovereignty missions,” Kelly will say, they would need “‘hot’ (live) guns, missiles, and extra gas tanks.” (9/11 Commission 10/14/2003 [↗](#))

Fighters Scrambled after Flight 11 Also Fly in Training Airspace - The pilots on the training mission saw the two of their unit’s F-15s that are kept on “alert”—ready for immediate launch—taking off from Otis Air Base in response to the hijacked Flight 11 (see 8:46 a.m. September 11, 2001), but were unaware of the reason for the scramble (see (8:30 a.m.-8:59 a.m.) September 11, 2001). (102nd Fighter Wing 2001; Lehmert 9/11/2006) (One of the pilots of those F-15s, Daniel Nash, is reportedly standing in for the usual “alert” pilot, who is “scheduled for training” on this day, presumably taking part in the training mission in Whiskey 105. (Dennehy 8/21/2002)) The two F-15s launched in response to Flight 11 were actually directed toward Whiskey 105 after taking off (see (8:53 a.m.-9:05 a.m.) September 11, 2001 and 8:54 a.m.-8:55 a.m. September 11, 2001) and are in the training area from 9:09 a.m. to 9:13 a.m. (see 9:09 a.m.-9:13 a.m. September 11, 2001). (9/11 Commission 7/24/2004, pp. 20)

(9:03 a.m.) September 11, 2001: NORAD Phones Start Ringing 'Like Crazy'

In the NORAD operations center in Cheyenne Mountain, Colorado, workers see the second aircraft crashing into the World Trade Center live on television. (Diedrich 10/7/2001) Major General Rick Findley, NORAD's director of operations, later says that he now realizes "it was not an accident but a coordinated attack." Then, he recalls, "At about that moment in time, every phone in this cab, and every phone over in the command center, and every phone in all the centers in this building were ringing off the hook." Master Corporal Daniel Milne, the emergency action controller in the operations center, will similarly recall, "The feeling was total disbelief. Then the phones started ringing like crazy." (Canadian Broadcasting Corporation 9/11/2002; Dick 11/2004) It is unclear what causes all the phones to simultaneously ring. According to Aviation Week and Space Technology magazine, after the second tower is hit, "Calls from fighter units... started pouring into NORAD and sector operations centers, asking, 'What can we do to help?'" (see (After 9:03 a.m.) September 11, 2001) (Scott 6/3/2002) So this could be one factor. Also, a 1996 article in Airman magazine had quoted Stacey Knott, a technician in the NORAD operations center. She'd said, "Things can be pretty quiet in here." However, "One of the busiest times is during exercises. This room fills up.... The phones are ringing off the hook, and I've got phones in each hand." (McKenna 1/1996) On this morning, those in Cheyenne Mountain are in fact participating in a major exercise called Vigilant Guardian. (Scott 6/3/2002; CNN 9/11/2006) This is reportedly only canceled "shortly after" the second attack (see (Shortly After 9:03 a.m.) September 11, 2001) (Tudor 3/2002; Filson 2003, pp. 59) So it is plausible that this is also a factor in causing all the phones to suddenly ring. A similar thing appears to occur in the National Military Command Center (NMCC) at the Pentagon. According to a news article based on the recollections of two officers who are there, after the second plane hits the WTC, "Phones in the center began ringing off the hook." (Garamone 9/7/2006) Rick Findley later suggests that all the ringing phones are not a hindrance for NORAD, claiming, "The good news is we had lots of people here and we already had an operational architecture. We already had the command and control, the network, the phones, the data links. Everything was already in place that enabled us to react to the situation." (Canadian Broadcasting Corporation 9/11/2002)

(9:04 a.m.) September 11, 2001: Flight 175 Crash Leads to Confusion at NEADS; Some Think It Is a Simulation

NORAD's Northeast Air Defense Sector (NEADS) in Rome, NY, has just received a phone call informing it of the hijacking of Flight 175 (see (9:03 a.m.) September 11, 2001), and several personnel have witnessed the plane crashing into the second World Trade Center tower live on CNN. There is considerable confusion on the operations floor over whether the plane seen on TV is the hijacking they have just been informed of. Tape recordings capture NEADS personnel in the background trying to make sense of things: "Is this explosion part of that that we're lookin' at now on TV?"... "And there's a possible second hijack also—a United Airlines"... "Two planes?" Someone comments, "I think this is a damn input, to be honest." (Bronner 8/1/2006) Another person replies, "Then this is a damned messed-up input!" (Spencer 2008, pp. 84) "Input" refers to a simulation input, as part of a training exercise. (Bronner 8/1/2006) NORAD has the capacity to inject simulated material, including mass attacks, during exercises, "as though it was being sensed for the first time by a radar site." (US Department of Defense 1/15/1999) At least one military exercise this morning is reported to include simulated information injected onto radar screens (see (9:00 a.m.) September 11, 2001). (Simmie 12/9/2001) At the current time, despite the earlier crash of Flight 11, NORAD has yet to cancel a major exercise it is in the middle of (see (Shortly After 9:03 a.m.) September 11, 2001). (Filson 2003, pp. 59)

(Shortly After 9:03 a.m.) September 11, 2001: NORAD Training Exercise Canceled

A NORAD training exercise that is taking place this morning, presumably Vigilant Guardian (see (6:30 a.m.) September 11, 2001), is reportedly canceled shortly after 9:03, when the second World Trade Center tower is hit. (Tudor 3/2002) NORAD Commander Larry Arnold later says that after Flight 175 hits the South Tower, "I thought it might be prudent to pull out of the exercise, which we did." (Filson 2003, pp. 59) According to author Lynn Spencer: "The phone calls start flying between the various NORAD command centers. General Arnold calls Maj. Gen. Rick Findley" at NORAD's operations center in

Cheyenne Mountain, Colorado, “to give him the latest information and have him withdraw all forces from the simulated exercise.” (Spencer 2008, pp. 86) Arnold will recall, “As we pulled out of the exercise we were getting calls about United Flight 93 and we were worried about that.” (Filson 2003, pp. 59) Some early accounts say the military receives notification of the possible hijacking of Flight 93 at around 9:16 a.m. (see 9:16 a.m. September 11, 2001). (CNN 9/17/2001; 9/11 Commission 5/23/2003) However, the 9/11 Commission will later claim that NORAD’s Northeast Air Defense Sector (NEADS) first receives a call about Flight 93 at 10:07 a.m. (see 10:05 a.m.-10:08 a.m. September 11, 2001). (9/11 Commission 6/17/2004) Arnold will add, “Then we had another call from Boston Center about a possible hijacking, but that turned out to be the airplane that had already hit the South Tower but we didn’t know that at the time.” (Filson 2003, pp. 59)

(After 9:03 a.m.) September 11, 2001: Military’s Counterterrorism Force Cancels Preparations for Exercise Based on Terrorists Threatening to Attack US



Logo of the Joint Special Operations Command. [Source: *Joint Special Operations Command*]

The Joint Special Operations Command (JSOC), which is the US military’s elite counterterrorism force, cancels its final preparations for a large-scale training exercise that is based on the scenario of terrorists threatening to attack the US with an unconventional weapon. The exercise, code-named Ellipse Charlie, would involve Special Operations troops who are trained in hostage-rescue operations and counterterrorism missions “rehearsing a complicated mock attack from a foe like al-Qaeda,” according to journalists Eric Schmitt and Thom Shanker. The goal of the 16-day exercise would be to find and thwart terrorists who have captured a nuclear, chemical, or biological weapon and are threatening to use it against the United States. [Exercise Canceled Due to Real-World Attacks](#) - About 1,800 Special Operations forces and several other secret government operators have been preparing to take part in the exercise, which is overseen by the United States European Command, and is set to take place in six European and

Mediterranean countries and on a ship at sea. The exercise is called off during its final planning stages following the terrorist attacks in the United States, and the commandos involved in it then hurry back to their normal bases. (Schmitt and Shanker 2011, pp. 22-23) Further details of the exercise, including the date it is set to commence, are unknown. However, the previous Ellipse Charlie exercise, held throughout September 2000, reportedly involved “hostage rescue, vessel recovery, infiltration, re-supplying troops on the ground, and removal of Special Operations forces.” About 4,000 Special Operations Command personnel, ships, and aircraft participated in it. (GlobalSecurity (.org) 5/7/2011) [Command Is Responsible for Counterterrorism Missions](#) - The highly secretive Joint Special Operations Command, which has been preparing for this year’s Ellipse Charlie exercise, is based at Fort Bragg in North Carolina and also operates out of Pope Air Force Base, North Carolina. It is responsible for conducting the military’s most sensitive counterterrorism missions. (Risen and Schmitt 9/3/2002; GlobalSecurity (.org) 12/8/2011) JSOC’s counterterrorism activities, according to a 1994 report by the General Accounting Office, involve “the application of highly specialized capabilities to preempt or resolve terrorist incidents abroad, including (1) hostage rescue, (2) recovery of sensitive materiel from terrorist organizations, and (3) direct action against the terrorist infrastructure.” (General Accounting Office 3/24/1994, pp. 11-12)

(9:09 a.m. and After) September 11, 2001: Numerous False Reports of Hijacked Aircraft Cause Confusion



During the course of the morning, there are “multiple erroneous reports of hijacked aircraft in the system,” according to the 9/11 Commission. (9/11 Commission 6/17/2004) Around 9:09 a.m., the FAA Command Center reports that 11 aircraft are either not communicating with FAA facilities or flying unexpected routes. (Scott 6/3/2002) NORAD’s Major General Larry Arnold will later claim that during the “four-hour ordeal” of the attacks, a total of 21 planes are identified as possible hijackings. (Filson 2002; Code One Magazine 1/2002; Filson 2003, pp. 71) Colonel Robert Marr, the NEADS battle commander, will recall, “At one time I was told that across the nation there were some 29 different reports of



NEADS commander Robert Marr. [Source: Dick Blume]

hijackings.” (Baker 3/31/2005) Officials will later claim that these false reports cause considerable chaos. Arnold says that particularly during the time between the Pentagon being hit at 9:37 a.m. and Flight 93 going down at around 10:06 a.m., “a number of aircraft are being called possibly hijacked.... There was a lot of confusion, as you can imagine.” (Filson 2003, pp. 71-73) He says: “We were receiving many reports of hijacked aircraft. When we received those calls, we might not know from where the aircraft had departed. We also didn’t know the location of the airplane.” (Code One Magazine 1/2002) According to Marr: “There were a number of false reports out there. What was valid? What was a guess? We just didn’t know.” (Filson 2003, pp. 73) Assistant Secretary of Defense for Public Affairs Victoria Clarke, who is in the Pentagon during the attacks and for most of the rest of the day, will recall: “There were lots of false signals out there. There were false hijack squawks, and a great part of the challenge was sorting through what was a legitimate threat and what wasn’t.” (CNN 6/17/2004; Clarke 2006, pp. 215-231)


9:11 a.m. September 11, 2001: Global Guardian Military Exercise Paused, but Apparently Not Yet Terminated

The US Strategic Command (Stratcom) orders that its Global Guardian exercise be put on pause at this time, according to a 2006 article in *The Bombardier*, the newspaper for Barksdale Air Force Base, Louisiana. (*Bombardier* 9/8/2006 ) Global Guardian is an annual exercise sponsored by Stratcom, which has its headquarters at Offutt Air Force Base, Nebraska. The exercise tests Stratcom’s ability to fight a nuclear war (see 8:30 a.m. September 11, 2001). (Dejka 2/27/2002; GlobalSecurity (.org) 4/27/2005) Many aircraft and personnel at Barksdale, as well as other military bases, are involved in it (see 8:48 a.m. September 11, 2001). (Villafuerte 9/8/2002) Global Guardian will be formally terminated at 10:44 a.m., according to *The Bombardier* (see (10:44 a.m.) September 11, 2001), although other reports will say it is canceled earlier on, possibly after the second World Trade Center tower is hit at 9:03 a.m. (Dejka 2/27/2002; Dejka 9/8/2002; *Bombardier* 9/8/2006 )

9:15 a.m. September 11, 2001: NEADS Technician Says Exercise Not Yet Canceled

A technician at NORAD’s Northeast Air Defense Sector (NEADS) tells a caller that the day’s training exercise has not yet been called off, despite the attacks in New York. (North American Aerospace Defense Command 9/11/2001) All of NORAD, including NEADS, has been participating in a major exercise called Vigilant Guardian this morning (see (6:30 a.m.) September 11, 2001). (Scott 6/3/2002; Arkin 2005, pp. 545) According to some accounts, this exercise was canceled shortly after 9:03 a.m., when the second World Trade Center tower was hit (see (Shortly After 9:03 a.m.) September 11, 2001). (Tudor 3/2002; Filson 2003, pp. 59) However, Sergeant Mark Jennings, a NEADS tracking technician, now answers a phone call, and the caller says he has been watching the coverage of the terrorist attacks on television “for about 10 minutes, and I said, ‘I wonder if they’re—did they suspend the exercise?’” Jennings informs the caller that the exercise has not yet been suspended, answering, “Not at this time, no.” He adds: “But I think they’re going to [suspend it]. I don’t know. Things look pretty horrific out there.” The caller acknowledges, “Alrighty, man.” (North American Aerospace Defense Command 9/11/2001)

(9:25 a.m.-9:45 a.m.) September 11, 2001: Otis Air Base Fighters Away on Training Mission Recalled and Return to Base

A number of fighter jets from Otis Air National Guard Base in Massachusetts that are out over the Atlantic Ocean on a training mission are notified of the first crash at the World Trade Center and then return to their base. The fighters belong to the 102nd Fighter Wing. (102nd Fighter Wing 2001; 9/11 Commission 1/7/2004 ; Richard 2010, pp. 13-14; Roughton 9/3/2011) According to most accounts, six of the unit’s F-15 fighters are taking part in the training mission. (102nd Fighter Wing 2001; North American Aerospace Defense Command 9/11/2001; Lehmert 9/11/2006; Spencer 2008, pp. 155) But Major Martin Richard, one of the pilots involved, will write in a 2010 book that eight F-15s are taking

part. (Richard 2010, pp. 10)

Fighters Recalled for 'Possible Use' - The fighters took off from Otis Air Base at 9:00 a.m. for their “defensive counter-air” mission in an area of military training airspace over the Atlantic Ocean, southeast of Long Island, known as “Whiskey 105” (see (9:00 a.m.-9:24 a.m.) September 11, 2001). (9/11 Commission 10/14/2003 [A](#); Roughton 9/3/2011) Following the second attack on the WTC at 9:03 a.m., commanders at Otis Air Base convened and decided to recall all aircraft out on training (see Shortly After 9:03 a.m. September 11, 2001). (Spencer 2008, pp. 153-154) A member of staff at NORAD’s Northeast Air Defense Sector (NEADS) tells a colleague that the fighters in Whiskey 105 are being recalled to Otis for “possible use, so we’ve got more aircraft [on] standby.” (North American Aerospace Defense Command 9/11/2001)

Controller Tells Fighters to Return to Base - The fighters are recalled to their base at around 9:25 a.m. (9/11 Commission 10/14/2003 [A](#); 9/11 Commission 1/7/2004 [A](#)) Shortly after they arrive in Whiskey 105, Richard is called by an air traffic controller at the FAA’s Boston Center. (Lehmert 9/11/2006) Richard will later note that “for a controller to interrupt our training mission was out of the norm.” (Richard 2010, pp. 13) According to Airman, the controller tells Richard: “There’s something going on in New York. I think you guys need to get back to your base.” (Roughton 9/3/2011) But Richard will recall that the controller says, “[A]n aircraft just crashed into the World Trade Center and I think you should return to base immediately.” Richard replies, “Copy,” meaning he understands. However, he will say: “I was a bit confused. I didn’t know the extent of the pandemonium residing just outside of our sterile training airspace.” (Richard 2010, pp. 13)

Pilot Not Told Why Alert Jets Were Scrambled - Before taking off from Otis Air Base, Richard had seen the two of his unit’s fighters that are kept on “alert”—ready for immediate launch—taking off in response to the hijacked Flight 11 (see 8:46 a.m. September 11, 2001), but he had been unaware of why they were being scrambled (see (8:30 a.m.-8:59 a.m.) September 11, 2001). Therefore, Richard will recall, “When the FAA announced that the World Trade [Center] tower had been struck by an aircraft, I asked if this was why the alert pilots had been scrambled.” However, he will say, he “got no reply.” It is unclear whether the pilots on the training mission are informed of the aircraft hijackings at this time. Richard will recall, “[W]hen it came over the radio that it was a possible hijacking, it sure got our attention,” but he will not say when this radio communication occurs. (102nd Fighter Wing 2001; Lehmert 9/11/2006)

Supervisor Tells Pilot to Get Back to Base - Richard hurriedly dials the radio frequency to contact Lieutenant Colonel Jon Treacy, his unit’s supervisor of flying, who controls flying operations from the ground. (Richard 2010, pp. 13) Richard asks, “Do you need us back on base?” and Treacy replies, “Get back here as soon as you can.” (Lehmert 9/11/2006)

Fighters Have Too Much Fuel to Land - The fighters were split apart over the Whiskey 105 airspace for their training mission. Rather than spending time getting them back together, Richard orders the pilots to go back to base in flights of two jets. Furthermore, another problem will delay their return: the fighters all have too much fuel to be able to land. Therefore, Richard will write, “Rather than dump the fuel overboard, which would take upwards of six to nine minutes, we got together in twos and did some basic fighter maneuvering.” These maneuvers, which are done in full afterburner, are “the most expeditious way to get to landing weight.” As the pilots request clearance to fly out of Whiskey 105 and back to Otis Air Base, their radios become crowded with communications. Richard comments, “It sounds like we are at war.”

Pilots Told to Stay at Their Aircraft after Landing - The pilots still have little idea what is going on, so Richard contacts Treacy for an update. However, Treacy has nothing concrete to tell him and only says, “After you land, stay at your jets; we’ll run the classified packs out to you.” These “classified packs” fit into the leg pocket of a pilot’s g-suit, and include the classified codes and guidance pilots fly with when on alert. Richard will write, “In light of recent events, it seemed we had been drafted for alert duty.” (Richard 2010, pp. 13-14)

Pilots Told to Prepare Fighters for Alert - The fighters arrive at Otis Air Base around 20 minutes after they are called back there, according to author Lynn Spencer. As they taxi in, the pilots receive an instruction over their radios from Treacy, who tells them, “Cock your jets for alert!” They have never received such an order before. It means that instead of parking and shutting down their aircraft, they must prepare them to be scrambled from the flight line, with all of the instruments, controls, and switches set ready for immediate takeoff orders. After doing as instructed, the pilots head into the

operations building to find out what is happening. (Spencer 2008, pp. 155) Most of the squadron personnel are huddled by the television in the break room, watching the coverage of the terrorist attacks. One of the life support technicians turns to Richard and says, "It's a goddamn Tom Clancy novel!" Richard will comment, "It was obvious now that we were at war." (Richard 2010, pp. 14) A number of the fighters that come back from the training mission, which have no ordnance on them, will be armed and also refueled, ready to take off to protect US airspace. (102nd Fighter Wing 2001) The first fighters to subsequently take off from Otis Air Base will launch at around 10:30 a.m. (see (10:30 a.m.) September 11, 2001 and (Shortly After 10:30 a.m.) September 11, 2001). (9/11 Commission 10/14/2003 [A](#)); Spencer 2008, pp. 244-246)

9:28 a.m. September 11, 2001: NORAD Possibly Holding 'Live-Fly' Training Exercise

According to former counterterrorism "tsar" Richard Clarke, around this time the acting Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Richard Myers speaks to him via video link (see 9:28 a.m. September 11, 2001). During their conversation, Myers mentions, "We are in the middle of Vigilant Warrior, a NORAD exercise." (Clarke 2004, pp. 5) However, no other references have been found to this exercise, "Vigilant Warrior." Considering that exercise terms are "normally an unclassified nickname," (Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff 4/23/1998 [A](#)) this is perhaps a little odd. Could Richard Clarke have mistakenly been referring to the Vigilant Guardian exercise (see (6:30 a.m.) September 11, 2001), which is taking place on 9/11? According to a later news report though, NORAD confirms that "it was running two mock drills on Sept. 11 at various radar sites and Command Centers in the United States and Canada," one of these being Vigilant Guardian. (Kelly 12/5/2003) If this is correct then there must be another NORAD exercise on 9/11. If not "Vigilant Warrior," a possibility is that the exercise referred to by Richard Clarke is in fact "Amalgam Warrior," which is a NORAD-sponsored, large-scale, live-fly air defense and air intercept field training exercise. Amalgam Warrior usually involves two or more NORAD regions and is held twice yearly, in the spring for the West Coast and in the autumn for the East Coast. (US Congress n.d.; McKenna 1/1996; Arkin 2005, pp. 254; GlobalSecurity (.org) 4/27/2005) Is it possible that in 2001 the East Coast Amalgam Warrior is being held earlier than usual (like Global Guardian (see 8:30 a.m. September 11, 2001)) and is taking place on 9/11? In support of this possibility is a 1997 Defense Department report that describes the Stratcom exercise Global Guardian, saying it "links with other exercise activities sponsored by the Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff, and the Unified Commands." The exercises it links with are Crown Vigilance (an Air Combat Command exercise), Apollo Guardian (a US Space Command exercise), and—significantly—the NORAD exercises Vigilant Guardian and Amalgam Warrior. (US Department of Defense 5/1997; GlobalSecurity (.org) 4/27/2005) Since in 2001, Vigilant Guardian (see (6:30 a.m.) September 11, 2001) is occurring the same time as Global Guardian, might Amalgam Warrior be as well? In his book *Code Names*, William Arkin says that Amalgam Warrior is "sometimes combined with Global Guardian." (Arkin 2005, pp. 254) Amalgam Warrior tests such activities as tracking, surveillance, air interception, employing rules of engagement, attack assessment, electronic warfare, and counter-cruise-missile operations. A previous Amalgam Warrior in 1996 involved such situations as tracking unknown aircraft that had incorrectly filed their flight plans or wandered off course, in-flight emergencies, terrorist aircraft attacks, and large-scale bomber strike missions. Amalgam Warrior 98-1 was NORAD's largest ever exercise and involved six B-1B bombers being deployed to Eielson Air Force Base, Alaska, to act as an enemy threat by infiltrating the aerial borders of North America. (McKenna 1/1996; Arkin 2005, pp. 254; GlobalSecurity (.org) 4/27/2005) Another Amalgam Warrior in fall 2000 similarly involved four B-1 bombers acting as enemy forces trying to invade Alaska, with NORAD going from tracking the unknown aircraft to sending up "alert" F-15s in response. (Price 10/27/2000; Associated Press 10/29/2000) If either one (or both) of these exercises ending with the name "Warrior" is taking place on 9/11, this could be very significant, because the word "Warrior" indicates that the exercise is a Joint Chiefs of Staff-approved, Commander in Chief, NORAD-sponsored field training exercise. (North American Aerospace Defense Command 8/25/1989) Real planes would be pretending to be threats to the US and real fighters would be deployed to defend against them.

9:30 a.m.-10:30 a.m. September 11, 2001: Agency near Pentagon Scheduled to Practice Response to Simulated Plane

Crash



A Learjet 35A. [Source: enviscope GmbH]

A training exercise planned by a US government agency is scheduled to include the scenario of a small corporate jet plane hitting a building just over 20 miles from the Pentagon around this time, though whether the scenario is actually played out before the exercise is called off is unclear. (Hess 8/22/2002; 9/11 Commission 7/14/2003) The exercise was set to begin at 9:00 a.m. at the headquarters of the National Reconnaissance Office (NRO) in Chantilly, Virginia (see 9:00 a.m. September 11, 2001), which is just four miles from Washington Dulles International Airport, from where Flight 77 took off.

(Lumpkin 8/21/2002; Hess 8/22/2002)

Simulated Crash around Time of Pentagon Attack - In the exercise scenario, a Learjet 35A with two pilots and four passengers takes off from Dulles Airport at 9:30 a.m. About a minute later, an explosion is heard, and the pilot complains that one of the engines is on fire and he is losing altitude. Around 9:32 a.m., the plane crashes into tower 4 at the NRO headquarters. (9/11 Commission 7/14/2003) This would be just five minutes before the real attack occurs at the Pentagon, which is 24 miles away from the NRO headquarters (see 9:37 a.m. September 11, 2001). (Hess 8/22/2002; 9/11 Commission 7/24/2004, pp. 10)

Simulation Includes Numerous Deaths and Injuries - According to a description of the exercise scenario: "Various parts of the aircraft struck the outside portions of the building, spraying jet fuel. The final portions of the wreckage were scattered around the entryway between tower 1 and 2. Jet fuel was burning uncontrollably in the vicinity of the flagpoles. There are a number of injured and dead NRO employees." (9/11 Commission 7/14/2003) No real plane is to be used in the simulation, and the crash is to be the result of mechanical failure, not terrorism. (Lumpkin 8/21/2002)

Exercise 'Inputs' - The exercise is set to include numerous "inputs," which are presumably communications and other actions that will make it appear more realistic to participants. Planned "inputs" include, at 9:30 a.m. a smoke generator is to be started. At 9:32, numerous phone calls are set to begin flooding in, from people reporting fires in various locations in the building. At 9:34, after someone reports that a small civilian jet has crashed, NRO personnel are to be instructed to evacuate their building. At 9:37, the first engine from Fairfax County Fire Department is scheduled to arrive. (The exercise description states that "inputs from simulated Fairfax responders" are to be used "if Fairfax does not play.") At 10:03, four more fire department trucks and emergency medical technician vehicles respond to the crash. By 10:30 all the simulated fires will have been extinguished, but at least four NRO employees will be confirmed to have died in the crash. The exercise is set to end at 11:45 a.m. (9/11 Commission 7/14/2003)

Exercise Canceled, Timing Unclear - The exercise is reportedly called off in response to the morning's real world crisis. However, the time when it is canceled is unstated. NRO spokesman Art Haubold will only say, "As soon as the real world events began, we canceled the exercise." (Lumpkin 8/21/2002) It is therefore unclear whether the simulated plane crash is actually played out, or whether the exercise is brought to an end beforehand. After the exercise is called off, all but the NRO's most essential employees are sent home. (Hess 8/22/2002)

9:34 a.m. September 11, 2001: NEADS Surveillance Technicians Instructed to Remove Simulated Information from Radar Screens



A technician at NORAD's Northeast Air Defense Sector (NEADS) instructs personnel on the NEADS operations floor to turn off their "sim switches," apparently so as to remove from their radar screens simulated information for a training exercise that was being conducted this morning. (Northeast Air Defense Sector 8/23/2001; North American Aerospace Defense Command 9/11/2001; 9/11 Commission 2004)


Staffer Complained, 'Let's Get Rid of This Goddamn Sim' - A few

NORAD's air defence computer system, the AN/FYQ-93. [Source: *Federation of American Scientists*]

minutes earlier, at 9:30 a.m., a member of staff on the operations floor complained about simulated information—presumably false tracks—appearing on NEADS radar screens. He said: “You know what, let’s get rid of this godd_mn sim. Turn your sim switches off. Let’s get rid of that crap.” (North American Aerospace Defense Command 9/11/2001; North American Aerospace Defense Command 9/11/2001) (A “sim switch” presumably allows simulated material on radar scopes to be turned on or off.)

Technician Instructs, 'Turn Off Your Sim Switches' - Now a member of NEADS staff, who according to a 9/11 Commission document is Technical Sergeant Jeffrey Richmond, gives an instruction to the NEADS surveillance technicians, “All surveillance, turn off your sim switches.” Seconds later, apparently in response to this instruction, someone on the operations floor tells a colleague, “You got your sim switches down.” (North American Aerospace Defense Command 9/11/2001; 9/11 Commission 2004)

Sim Switches Turned On for Day's Exercise - Simulated material (“sim”) is apparently appearing on NEADS radar screens because of the NORAD training exercise, Vigilant Guardian, that was being conducted this morning (see (6:30 a.m.) September 11, 2001). Former Deputy Secretary of Defense John Hamre has revealed that NORAD has the capacity to inject simulated material into the system, “as though it was being sensed for the first time by a radar site.” In a training exercise in December 1998, for example, NORAD ran “30 different simulations, some of them being mass attacks, some of them being single missiles.” An information page on the current exercise stated, “All of NEADS, operations personnel are to have their sim switches turned ‘on’ starting at 1400Z 6 Sept. 01 till endex [the end date of the exercise].” Since Vigilant Guardian was originally scheduled to continue until September 13, this would mean NEADS personnel had their sim switches turned on this morning. (US Department of Defense 1/15/1999; Northeast Air Defense Sector 8/23/2001)

Radar Equipment Set to Display 'Sim Tracks' - A memo outlining special instructions for Vigilant Guardian participants further detailed how NORAD equipment needed to be set to display simulated material during the exercise. It stated: “The exercise will be conducted sim over live on the air sovereignty string. The Q-93 must be placed in the mixed mode to allow the telling [i.e. the communicating of information between facilities] of sim tracks.” (Northeast Air Defense Sector 8/23/2001) The Q-93 is a piece of equipment used by NORAD, which is described as “a suite of computers and peripheral equipment configured to receive plot data from ground radar systems,” and which “performs track processing.” (General Accounting Office 12/24/1992 ; Federation of American Scientists 4/23/2000) The Q-93 also “receives flight plans from the FAA, and has bi-directional communications with NORAD headquarters and a real-time link to AWACS [Airborne Warning and Control System planes].” (Satterthwaite, Corman, and Herm 6/2002)


Exercise Supposedly Canceled Earlier On - While NEADS radar scopes are still displaying simulated material as late as 9:34 a.m., some accounts will claim the Vigilant Guardian exercise was canceled shortly after 9:03 a.m., when the second World Trade Center tower was hit (see (Shortly After 9:03 a.m.) September 11, 2001). (Tudor 3/2002; Filson 2003, pp. 59) And according to a report in the Toronto Star, “Any simulated information” for the exercise was “purged from the [radar] screens” at NORAD’s operations center in Cheyenne Mountain, Colorado, shortly before the second WTC tower was hit (see (9:00 a.m.) September 11, 2001). (Simmie 12/9/2001) However, NEADS will receive a phone call from the operations center at 10:12 a.m. in which the caller asks it to “terminate all exercise inputs coming into Cheyenne Mountain” (see 10:12 a.m. September 11, 2001). (North American Aerospace Defense Command 9/11/2001)

9:35 a.m. September 11, 2001: Boston Center and NEADS Decide to Send Home Fighter Jets on Training

The traffic management unit (TMU) at the FAA’s Boston Center calls NORAD’s Northeast Air Defense Sector (NEADS) to ask whether military planes out on training should be sent home. Boston Center asks, “The military aircraft that are in the air right now, we’re wondering if we should tell them to return to base if they’re just on training missions, or what you guys suggest?” NEADS replies, “No, they’re actually on the active air for the DO [director of operations] out there,” but adds, “We did send the ones home in 105 that were on the training mission.” This is presumably a reference to some fighters from Otis Air National Guard Base that were training in “Whiskey 105,” which is military training airspace southeast of Long Island (see (9:00 a.m.-9:24 a.m.) September 11, 2001 and (9:25 a.m.-9:45 a.m.) September 11, 2001). Boston Center mentions that there are other military aircraft still airborne for training, and asks,

“In general, anybody that’s training?” After consulting with colleagues, the member of staff at NEADS tells Boston, “Yes, go ahead and send them home.” (North American Aerospace Defense Command 9/11/2001) NEADS was involved in a major training exercise this morning, though this was reportedly canceled shortly after the second WTC tower was hit (see (Shortly After 9:03 a.m.) September 11, 2001). (Seely 1/25/2002; Tudor 3/2002)

(Shortly Before 9:37 a.m.) September 11, 2001: Airborne Command Post Launched from near Washington

An E-4B National Airborne Operations Center (NAOC) takes off from an unspecified airfield outside of Washington, DC. The aircraft, which is carrying civilian and military officials, is launched in order to participate in a pre-scheduled military exercise. This would be Global Guardian, which is being conducted on this day by the US Strategic Command (Stratcom) to test its ability to fight a nuclear war (see 8:30 a.m. September 11, 2001). E-4Bs are a militarized version of a Boeing 747. They serve as an airborne command center that could be used by the president, vice president, and Joint Chiefs of Staff, in order to execute war plans and coordinate government operations during a national emergency. Two other such planes are also participating in Global Guardian on this day (see Before 9:00 a.m. September 11, 2001). For the exercise, the E-4B launched from outside Washington is supposed to be using and testing its sophisticated technology and communications equipment. According to journalist and author Dan Verton, the aircraft has “only just taken off” at the time the Pentagon is hit (at 9:37 a.m.). Verton will say it is then “immediately ordered to cease the military exercise it was conducting and prepare to become the actual National Airborne Operations Center.” (Dejka 2/27/2002; Verton 2003, pp. 143-144) (Global Guardian was reportedly put on pause at 9:11 a.m. (see 9:11 a.m. September 11, 2001), but it is not formally terminated until 10:44 a.m. (see (10:44 a.m.) September 11, 2001). (Bombardier 9/8/2006 )) Minutes after the Pentagon attack, an unidentified four-engine jet plane will be seen circling above the White House (see (9:41 a.m.-9:42 a.m.) September 11, 2001). CNN will later suggest this is an E-4B, so it is possible it is the plane launched from the airfield outside Washington that Verton describes. (CNN 9/12/2007) Air traffic control tapes will reveal that an E-4B takes off from Andrews Air Force Base, 10 miles from Washington, at 9:43 a.m., several minutes after the Pentagon is hit (see 9:43 a.m. September 11, 2001). (9/11 Commission 2/17/2004; Farmer 2009, pp. 206) Whether that aircraft is the one participating in Global Guardian that is described by Verton, or another E-4B, is unclear.

(Shortly After 9:35 a.m.) September 11, 2001: Otis Fighters Refueled by Tanker out for Training Mission




A KC-135 Stratotanker. [Source: Boeing]

The two F-15 fighter jets launched from Otis Air National Guard Base in response to Flight 11 (see 8:46 a.m. September 11, 2001) are finally able to refuel, after they request to rendezvous with a tanker plane that was scheduled to refuel Otis fighters out on training missions this morning. (Scott 6/3/2002; Spencer 2008, pp. 153)


Fighters Low on Fuel - By around 9:35 a.m., according to author Lynn Spencer, the two Otis fighters are running increasingly low on fuel and need to find a fuel tanker right away. For about the last 25 minutes, technicians at NORAD’s Northeast Air Defense Sector

(NEADS) have been searching for a tanker (see (9:09 a.m.) September 11, 2001). (Spencer 2008, pp. 112 and 152-153) A member of staff at NEADS in fact talked over the radio with a KC-135 tanker from Bangor, Maine, at around 9:05 a.m., and the plane’s crew agreed to provide support to the Otis fighters launched in response to Flight 11 (see 9:04 a.m.-9:06 a.m. September 11, 2001). (North American Aerospace Defense Command 9/11/2001; North American Aerospace Defense Command 9/11/2001) However, the pilots of these fighters have apparently not heard back from NEADS about whether it has been able to find a tanker for them. Now one of the pilots, Major Daniel Nash, has come up with a solution. Prior to being put on alert duty, he had been acting as the scheduling officer at Otis Air Base, and he therefore knows that a training mission a number of Otis fighters were scheduled to fly today

called for refueling (see (9:00 a.m.-9:24 a.m.) September 11, 2001). Consequently he knows about the KC-135 tanker plane from Bangor that NEADS communicated with earlier on, which had been scheduled to support those fighters during their training. (102nd Fighter Wing 2001; Spencer 2008, pp. 152-153) Tanker Heading toward Training Airspace - The tanker plane, which has the call sign “Maine 85,” is one of the eight KC-135s that are attached to the 101st Air Refueling Wing, based at Bangor International Airport. Its pilots are Lieutenant Colonel Adam Jenkins and Lieutenant Colonel Andy Marshall. (Cohen 9/13/2001; Ricker 9/9/2011) It had been scheduled to rendezvous with the Otis fighters on their training mission about 20 minutes from now in “Whiskey 105,” the military training airspace just south of Long Island, where Nash and his fellow Otis pilot Timothy Duffy had earlier been flying in a “holding pattern” (see 9:09 a.m.-9:13 a.m. September 11, 2001). The KC-135 should be on its way there now. Nash calls Duffy and tells him, “[W]e have a tanker scheduled for the training missions this morning off the coast in 105.” Duffy calls NEADS and requests that the KC-135 orbit at 20,000 feet above New York’s JFK International Airport. NEADS then coordinates with the 101st Air Refueling Wing to borrow the tanker. (Scott 6/3/2002; Spencer 2008, pp. 153)

Tanker Directed toward New York - The KC-135 is instructed to fly toward Manhattan. Jenkins will later recall, “We were told to start heading west to the city.” The voice over his radio tells him, “We’ll give you details along the way.” (Ricker 9/9/2011) Soon, the KC-135 is flying an orbit over JFK Airport and the two Otis fighters then take turns refueling. (Grant 2004, pp. 21; Grant and Thompson 10/6/2006, pp. 4 ; Spencer 2008, pp. 153) According to the 9/11 Commission Report, the two Otis fighters arrived over Manhattan at 9:25 a.m. (see 9:25 a.m. September 11, 2001), but accounts of most witnesses on the ground indicate they do not arrive there until after 10:00 a.m. (see (9:45 a.m.-10:45 a.m.) September 11, 2001). (9/11 Commission 7/24/2004, pp. 24)

Before 9:37 a.m. September 11, 2001: Army Base near Pentagon Holding Air Field Fire Fighting Training

At the Education Center at Fort Myer, an army base 1.5 miles northwest of the Pentagon, the base’s firefighters are undertaking training variously described as “an airport rescue firefighters class”; “an aircraft crash refresher class”; “a week-long class on Air Field Fire Fighting”; and a “training exercise in airport emergency operations.” Despite hearing of the first WTC crash during a break, with no access to a TV, the class simply continues with its training. According to Bruce Surette, who is attending the session: “We had heard some radio transmissions from some other units in Arlington about how they thought they had a plane down here or a plane down there. So you’re thinking, ‘Hey this could be real.’ But it really didn’t strike home as being real until our guy came on the radio and said where the plane crash was.” The Fort Myer firefighters then immediately head for the Pentagon, arriving there at 9:40 a.m., only three minutes after it is hit, and participate in the firefighting and rescue effort there. The fire station at the Pentagon heliport is actually operated by the Fort Myer Fire Department, and is manned on the morning of 9/11 by three Fort Myer firefighters who have already undertaken the airfield firefighting training. (Brewster 10/4/2001; Lilly and Walz 11/2/2001; Ward 4/2002 ; US Department of Health and Human Services 7/2002; Wallace 4/17/2003) The Fort Myer military community, which includes Fort Myer and Fort Lesley J. McNair—another army base, just two miles east of the Pentagon—was scheduled to hold a “force protection exercise” the week after 9/11. However this has been cancelled, so just prior to the attacks the morning of September 11, “some of its participants [are] breathing a sigh of relief.” (Norris 9/14/2001)

Shortly After 9:37 a.m. September 11, 2001: Some Pentagon Medical Workers Initially Think Evacuation Is Part of a Drill

A number of medical workers at the US Army’s DiLorenzo Tricare Health Clinic (DTHC) initially believe the evacuation in response to the Pentagon attack is part of a training exercise. The DTHC is located in the basement on the east side of the Pentagon, more than 1,000 feet from where the building was hit, and therefore many of the people there did not feel or hear the impact when the attack occurred. (Boivin 9/24/2001; Goldberg et al. 2007, pp. 107-108; Creed and Newman 2008, pp. 57-58)

■ After being told to get out of the clinic, Captain Jennifer Glidewell leaves along with Sergeant Matthew Rosenberg. According to Glidewell, they are “thinking fire drill.” They head for the Pentagon’s center courtyard where they see an injured man running and screaming, with his face burnt and the skin



Paul Carlton Jr.
[Source: *Publicity photo*]

hanging off. According to authors Patrick Creed and Rick Newman, Glidewell initially thinks this is “the best moulage job she had ever seen. Moulage was the makeup medical practitioners put on mock patients during exercises, to simulate injuries.” When she realizes the injuries are genuine, she grabs her radio and yells into it: “This is not a drill! This is real!” (Office of Medical History 9/2004, pp. 19; Creed and Newman 2008, pp. 57-58)

- Sergeant Mark Maxey Davis will recall, “I just thought [the evacuation] was a routine fire drill or something like that.” (Office of Medical History 9/2004, pp. 69)

- Dr. Veena Railan describes: “I was not very sure what was happening, what was going on at that time. Maybe this is a drill because of what happened in New York.” (Office of Medical History 9/2004, pp. 125)

- Staff Sergeant Keith Pernel recalls, “We just thought it was a regular fire drill.” (Office of Medical History 9/2004, pp. 111)

- US Air Force Surgeon General Paul Carlton Jr. is accompanying a team of medics from the DTHC to the center courtyard. (Goldberg et al. 2007, pp. 109) He will recall that a young sergeant with him is “under the impression that this crash was yet another exercise.” Carlton tells him, “I think this one’s for real, my friend.” (Murphy 2002, pp. 222)

- Captain Liza Lindenberg later describes, “Not until we went out the door did I see these plumes of smoke and thought, this is definitely not a drill.” (Office of Medical History 9/2004, pp. 85)

- Major Bridget Larew remains at the clinic to help an injured victim. Soon, she will recall, “our medical teams were starting to come back in the building, realizing that this was not a drill and that they needed to be here with us to get supplies and stuff.” (Office of Medical History 9/2004, pp. 83)

A factor that may have contributed to this confusion is that personnel from the DTHC have participated in at least two training exercises during the previous 12 months based around the scenario of a plane crashing into the Pentagon (see October 24-26, 2000 and May 2001). (Ryan 11/3/2000; US Department of Health and Human Services 7/2002, pp. B17; Goldberg et al. 2007, pp. 107) In response to the attack, the clinic’s workers will be involved with the emergency response, performing triage and treatment at the Pentagon. (US Department of Health and Human Services 7/2002, pp. B1)

(9:40 a.m.) September 11, 2001: Hijacking Simulation Scheduled as Part of NORAD Exercise


As part of a NORAD training exercise, a simulated plane hijacking was scheduled to occur around this time. It was to have been based around politically motivated perpetrators taking command of an aircraft, landing it on a Cuba-like island, and seeking asylum there. The hijacking was one of several simulated scenarios prepared for the day. Details of the other scenarios are unknown. Major Kevin Nasypany, the mission crew commander at NORAD’s Northeast Air Defense Sector (NEADS) who’d helped designed the exercise, initially thought the reports of Flight 11 being hijacked were because “Somebody started the exercise early.” (Bronner 8/1/2006) The exercise was canceled after the second plane hit the World Trade Center (see (Shortly After 9:03 a.m.) September 11, 2001).

Before 9:55 a.m. September 11, 2001: AWACS Planes on Training Missions in Florida and Near Washington, DC

While President Bush is still in Sarasota, an AWACS (Airborne Warning and Control System plane) is flying a training mission off the coast of Florida. Referring to the AWACS plane, NORAD Commander Larry Arnold later says: “I had set up an arrangement with their wing commander at Tinker [Air Force Base, Oklahoma] some months earlier for us to divert their AWACS off a normal training mission to go into an exercise scenario simulating an attack on the United States. The AWACS crew initially thought we were going into one of those simulations.” Another AWACS is also flying a training mission, near Washington, DC, the morning of 9/11. (Code One Magazine 1/2002) When its pilot, Anthony Kuczynski, hears of the first WTC crash, he mistakenly believes he is involved in a planned military simulation. He says, “We sometimes do scenarios where we’re protecting the United States from bombers coming in from unknown areas.” (Forster 4/12/2002)

After 9:55 a.m. September 11, 2001: Ellington Fighters Airborne

on Local Training Mission

Two F-16s from the 147th Fighter Wing, Ellington Air National Guard Base, Texas, are said to be already airborne on a local training mission when they are instructed to escort Air Force One after it departs Sarasota, Florida, with President Bush on board. (Arnold 12/2001 ; Code One Magazine 1/2002)

10:03 a.m. September 11, 2001: FBI Anti-Terrorist Unit Away from Washington on Training Exercise in California

The FBI is reportedly in “chaos,” in particular because its Critical Incident Response Group (CIRG) is stranded away from Washington, DC, being instead in California for a major training exercise. The CIRG would normally coordinate the FBI’s rapid response to a crisis incident, such as a terrorist attack. (NBC 4 9/11/2001; Darling 2010, pp. 73-75) But NBC News reports that the FBI has been “operating a massive exercise from their hostage rescue unit. All of their top teams, about 50 personnel, helicopters, equipment, [have been] in Monterey, California, for the last two days, scheduled to fly back today commercially. So all of those people are out of place.” (NBC 4 9/11/2001) USA Today will add that the day’s attacks are “so unexpected that a joint FBI/CIA anti-terrorist task force that specifically prepared for this type of disaster was on a training exercise in Monterey.” (Nichols 9/11/2001) NBC News concludes: “It’s fair to say, according to sources that we’ve talked to here at NBC, that the FBI rescue operations and other FBI operations are really in chaos right now, because they can’t reach their officials in New York, all of their phone lines are down. And now you’ve got all of their special experts on this stuck in Monterey, California.... So they are seriously out of pocket, and there is a real breakdown of the FBI anti-terror coordination team, which is of course the principal team that would lead any effort.” (NBC 4 9/11/2001) The US politics website evote.com will similarly conclude, “[J]ust as the worst terrorist act was being committed on American lives and property, the chief federal agency responsible for preventing such crimes was being AWOL.” (Evote [.com] 9/11/2001) The CIRG arrived in California the previous day for a week of special weapons and tactics (SWAT)-related field training (see September 10, 2001). Its members will be flown back to Washington around late afternoon on a specially arranged flight (see Late Afternoon September 11, 2001). (Darling 2010, pp. 75-76)

(After 10:03 a.m.) September 11, 2001: Russia Cancels Air Force Exercise in Response to Attacks in the US

In response to the terrorist attacks in the United States, the Russian military cancels a major training exercise it has been holding, turning back its bomber aircraft and calling off planned missile testing. (Simmie 12/9/2001; Doscher 9/8/2011) The Russian Air Force began the exercise—which was being conducted over the North Atlantic, Pacific, and Arctic Oceans—on September 10 (see September 10, 2001), and had planned for it to continue until September 14. NORAD has deployed fighter jets to Alaska and Northern Canada to monitor the exercise (see September 9, 2001).

Russians Cancel Exercise to Avoid Confusion - The Russians now call off their exercise, “to avoid misunderstandings, since US defenses were now on high alert in case of further possible terrorist attacks,” according to BBC correspondent Bridget Kendall. (BBC 2001, pp. 161; North American Aerospace Defense Command 9/9/2001; Gertz 9/11/2001) “The Russians knew NORAD would have its hands full,” the Toronto Star will report. Lieutenant Colonel William Glover, the commander of NORAD’s Air Warning Center, will say the Russians stop their exercise “because they understood the magnitude of what had happened to us in the United States. They didn’t want any questions; they didn’t want us worrying about what they would be doing or entering our Air Defense Identification Zone.”

Russia Tells US about Canceling Exercise - The Russians notify the US of their actions. Captain Michael Jellinek, the director of plans, requirements, and readiness at NORAD’s Cheyenne Mountain Operations Center in Colorado, will later recall: “They sent the message to the State Department clearly and unambiguously: ‘Don’t worry about our movements, we’re going to stay down for a while.’”


Russia’s Actions Are ‘Very Helpful’ to US - It is unclear when exactly the Russians call off their exercise. According to the Toronto Star, they “immediately” cancel it “on seeing the attacks in New York and Washington.” Glover will say the Russians notify the US that they are stopping their exercise “after the United Flight 93 went into Shanksville” (see (10:03 a.m.-10:10 a.m.) September 11, 2001 and (10:06 a.m.) September 11, 2001). Jellinek will call the Russians’ actions in canceling their exercise “[v]ery, very useful. Very helpful.” Glover will comment, “[T]hat was amazing to me, personally, the fact that

they stopped their exercise and... that they told us that they were going to stop the exercise.” (Simmie 12/9/2001; Doscher 9/8/2011) Russian President Vladimir Putin will contact the White House and inform National Security Adviser Condoleezza Rice that the Russians are voluntarily canceling their exercise (see Between 10:32 a.m. and 11:45 a.m. September 11, 2001). (Balz and Woodward 1/27/2002)

10:06 a.m.-10:08 a.m. September 11, 2001: Some NEADS Staff and Others Uncertain Whether Day’s Training Exercise Is Over

Tape recordings of the operations floor at NORAD’s Northeast Air Defense Sector (NEADS) indicate that some military personnel are uncertain whether a training exercise that was being conducted on this day has been canceled. NEADS has been participating in a major exercise called Vigilant Guardian. (Seely 1/25/2002) This was reportedly called off “shortly after” the second WTC tower was hit at 9:03 (see (Shortly After 9:03 a.m.) September 11, 2001). (Tudor 3/2002) But at 10:06, someone calls NEADS and asks, “Is the exercise knocked off?” to which they are told, “Yes.” Two minutes later, a member of the NEADS staff is heard saying, “If this is an exercise input, this is a good one.” (North American Aerospace Defense Command 9/11/2001) It is around this time that NEADS is first alerted to Flight 93 (although this plane has already crashed) (see 10:05 a.m.-10:08 a.m. September 11, 2001) and also hears a report of an unidentified aircraft over the White House (see 10:07 a.m. September 11, 2001). So presumably it is one of these incidents that is considered a possible “exercise input,” meaning a simulated scenario. (Bronner 8/1/2006)

10:12 a.m. September 11, 2001: NORAD Operations Center Still Receiving False Radar Information for Training Exercise, Wants It Stopped

An officer at NORAD’s operations center in Cheyenne Mountain, Colorado, calls NORAD’s Northeast Air Defense Sector (NEADS) and asks it to stop “exercise inputs” being sent to the operations center. NORAD Calls Chief of Exercises at NEADS - The NORAD officer, a “Captain Taylor,” calls NEADS, where the phone is answered by Captain Brian Nagel. (North American Aerospace Defense Command 9/11/2001) Nagel is chief of NEADS live exercises. (Filson 2003, pp. 74) After introducing himself, Taylor says, “What we need you to do right now is to terminate all exercise inputs coming into Cheyenne Mountain.” Nagel gives Taylor an extension number and suggests that he call it to get the exercise inputs stopped. Taylor replies, “I’ll do that.” (North American Aerospace Defense Command 9/11/2001) According to an article in Vanity Fair, “inputs” are simulated scenarios that are put into play for training exercises. (Bronner 8/1/2006) NORAD has been conducting a major exercise this morning called Vigilant Guardian (see (6:30 a.m.) September 11, 2001). (Arkin 2005, pp. 545) Exercise Includes Simulated Radar Information - Taylor is presumably referring specifically to false tracks that have been transmitted onto NORAD radar screens for the exercise. NORAD has the capability to inject simulated material, including mass attacks, into the system during exercises, “as though it was being sensed for the first time by a radar site.” (US Department of Defense 1/15/1999) All of the operations personnel at NEADS have been instructed to “have their sim switches turned ‘on’” (presumably to allow simulated information to appear on their radar screens) from September 6 until the end of Vigilant Guardian, on September 13. An information page on the exercise stated that a “sim test track will be in place and forward told [i.e. transferred to a higher level of command] to both NORAD and CONR,” NORAD’s Continental United States Region. (Northeast Air Defense Sector 8/23/2001) Exercise Supposedly Called Off Earlier - More than 50 members of the battle staff at the NORAD operations center have been participating in Vigilant Guardian this morning. (Tudor 3/2002; 9/11 Commission 3/1/2004 ) Some accounts will claim this exercise was canceled shortly after 9:03 a.m., when the second World Trade Center tower was hit (see (Shortly After 9:03 a.m.) September 11, 2001). (Tudor 3/2002; Filson 2003, pp. 59) And a report in the Toronto Star will state, “Any simulated information” for the exercise was “purged from the [radar] screens” at the operations center shortly before the second tower was hit (see (9:00 a.m.) September 11, 2001). (Simmie 12/9/2001) But a member of staff at NEADS complained at 9:30 a.m. about simulated material still appearing on radar screens there, and at 9:34 a.m. the NEADS surveillance technicians were instructed to turn off their “sim switches” (see 9:34 a.m. September 11, 2001). (North American Aerospace Defense Command 9/11/2001; North American Aerospace Defense Command 9/11/2001; 9/11 Commission 2004)

(10:44 a.m.) September 11, 2001: Global Guardian Exercise Formally Canceled

The US Strategic Command (Stratcom) formally terminates its Global Guardian exercise at this time, according to a 2006 article in *The Bombardier*, the newspaper for Barksdale Air Force Base, Louisiana. Global Guardian was put on pause just over 90 minutes earlier, according to the same article (see 9:11 a.m. September 11, 2001). (*Bombardier 9/8/2006*) However, other reports will suggest that Global Guardian was canceled significantly earlier than 10:44 a.m. One article in the *Omaha World-Herald* will state, “When the second World Trade Center tower was hit,” at 9:03 a.m., “the exercise was canceled, and the battle staff [at Offutt Air Force Base, Nebraska] moved to the real-world crisis.” (*Dejka 9/8/2002*) But an earlier article in the *World-Herald* will say that military authorities canceled Global Guardian “after the attacks on the World Trade Center towers and the Pentagon,” suggesting some time after 9:37 a.m., when the Pentagon was hit. (*Dejka 2/27/2002*) An E-4B National Airborne Operations Center aircraft that was involved in Global Guardian was reportedly only told to pull out of the exercise just after the Pentagon was hit (see (Shortly Before 9:37 a.m.) September 11, 2001). (*Verton 2003*, pp. 143-144) Even after Global Guardian is canceled, this plane and two other E-4Bs that are involved in the exercise will remain airborne. (*Dejka 2/27/2002*) The annual Global Guardian exercise tests Stratcom’s ability to fight a nuclear war (see 8:30 a.m. September 11, 2001). (*Dejka 2/27/2002*; *GlobalSecurity (.org) 4/27/2005*)

2:50 p.m. September 11, 2001: President Bush Arrives in Nebraska; Enters Strategic Command Center



The entrance to the Offutt Air Force Base’s bunker, very far underground. Bush officials are seen here entering it on 9/11. [Source: *CBC*]

Having left Barksdale Air Force Base, Louisiana at around 1:30 p.m. (see 1:37 p.m. September 11, 2001), Air Force One lands at Offutt Air Force Base near Omaha, Nebraska. President Bush stays on the plane for about ten minutes before entering the United States Strategic Command bunker at 3:06 p.m. (*Tapper 9/11/2001*; *Langley 12/16/2001*) Offutt Air Force Base appears to be the headquarters of the US Strategic Command (Stratcom) exercise Global Guardian that was “in full swing” at the time the attacks began (see 8:30 a.m. September 11, 2001). While there, the president spends time in the underground Command Center from where Global Guardian was earlier being directed, being brought up to date on the attacks and their aftermath. (*Langley 12/16/2001*;

Dejka 2/27/2002; *Sammon 10/8/2002*)

