

DECLASSIFIED UNDER AUTHORITY OF THE INTERAGENCY SECURITY CLASSIFICATION APPEALS PANEL, E.O. 13526, SECTION 5.3(b)(3)
ISCAP APPEAL NO. 2011-048, document no. 32
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MEMORANDUM FOR THE RECORD

Event: Langley Air Force Base Site Visit
Type of event: Recorded Interview
Date: Monday, December 01, 2003
Special Access Issues: None, some of the discussion was classified and the tape classified accordingly. Those discussions were technical and are available on tape.
Prepared by: Miles Kara
Team Number: 8
Location: 119th Fighter Wing, Detachment One, Headquarters
Participant – Major Dean Eckmann, Flight Lead for the Quit scramble on 9-11
Participants - Commission: Miles Kara, Kevin Shaeffer
Observer – Colonel Pam Jefferson, USAF, Base Legal Office

Note: Please refer to the recorded interview for further details.

Background:

Major Eckmann is an experience pilot and has flown operationally since late 1994. In September 2000 he was hired as a commercial pilot by Northwest Orient, but still pulled alert as a Guardsman. He had flown alert missions since Dec 1994 or Jan 1995. He completed 8-10 week-long deployments over three years as an alert fighter at Langley AFB prior to 9-11. the 119th Wing began deployments at Langley in 1998. He is the one “unlucky” pilot who flew a lot of active air scrambles, one or two and sometimes three during a one-week deployment. Most were Navy guys not squawking code because of all the exercises the Navy conducts in the local area or because the plane was NORDO. No scrambles for civilian airliners. His first civilian scramble was a King Air coming in from Bermuda.

Scramble Experience: Most, with perhaps one exception, were takeoffs to the East. The one to the west involved a NORDO aircraft, not a commercial airliner. It is a 30 second to one minute to “back taxi” down the runway to take off to the west.

Control of Scrambles prior to 9-11: Scramble orders come over a phone to the command post which the pilots can pick up on. That order is accompanied by a klaxon and a series of warning lights to provide a visual indication of the status of the scramble: yellow – battle stations; green – scramble; green and yellow – runway alert; red – cancel. It was 50-50 as to whether they would actually get airborne on a scramble. They used to sit a 5-minute alert—from time of notification to airborne. If they get a green light it is go right now. If a yellow light it is simply go sit in the airplane with engines not started. By the book they require a 90-second delay to get inertial navigation spun up. At the same time the ground crew is performing its duties and arming the weapons. According to Eckmann, “if you can’t get out of the barn by two minutes you are doing something wrong, from the time you get a green light to taxi out.” A scramble order is not

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permission to take off because they have to flow into the FAA system. That adds a minute to two minutes. If you can get the "words" right away from the command post and get pushed over to tower, they don't go through ground control, to get their ATC clearance, a standard routing. Here they use LFI 319 [Note, check this against the preset items that were on the FIDO at the tower]. Tower will provide the heading and an altitude and Mode 3 squawk. His personal standard to get airborne from a green light was 5-6 minutes. If asleep, then 6-8 minutes to get airborne. His standard is to stay on UHF to talk to ATC and ask to go in a general direction, but he still has to follow his ATC clearance. After they take off and get 4000 feet up—they are not going to get HUNTRESS down low—he pushes his wingman, who is 1 1/2 to 2 miles in trail, over to HUNTRESS. That way he can stay legal with ATC and he can get target information through my wingman on the VHF radio. HUNTRESS will say your TOI [Target of Interest] is "120 for 180 miles." Then usually they will come back with a vector, because at that point the pilots do not know which way the target is heading. The vector order would be something like "110 for cut off." Now, he will go through ATC, center or departure, whoever they are talking to and say we need "110 for heading active air scramble." He used the phrase "active air" to indicate they need priority. Prior to 9-11 they always had a TOI. He was never vectored to a CAP prior to 9-11

Technical Details:

On 9-11 he and his wingman flew in a 2 0 2 B configuration. (2 SRAAM, 0 Aim 7 and 2 Aim 9, plus guns. The "B" configuration denotes two wing tanks. They were so configured because of the ongoing Russian exercise. The configuration for the day would be established in the Air Tasking Order (ATO). Normally they would fly 0 0 2 B, according to Eckmann. His trail pilot flew with hot guns only.

They flew "max subsonic," military power on 9-11, a speed Eckmann deemed "unusual." Mach One at sea level is 720 nm—10 miles a minute. That is a reasonable rate to use to calculate estimated transit times on 9-11. For example, if Washington DC was 110-120 nm from Langley it would take 12+ minutes to get there at max subsonic. Even so, there had to be a target established to begin with. As configured they might get 1.2 to 1.3 mach at 23K altitude.

Eckmann was Quit 25 and was on frequency UHF 379.1 with Air Traffic Controll. Derrig was Quit 26 and was on frequency [redacted] with Huntress. Borgstrom was also on with Huntress on frequency [redacted]

E.O. 13526, section 1.4(a)

9-11

Eckmann was the SAP, Senior Alert Pilot, Brad Derrig was the JAP, Junior Alert Pilot and Craig Borgstrom was the SOF, Supervisor of Flying. They had a local training mission scheduled, noon takeoff, with the Eagles (Langley F-15s), so Eckmann was in his flight suit. Borgstrom was to be the JAP for that exercise. He got the Eagles lineup card via fax at about 0900, and he was working on a briefing board. His crew chief came up and told him, hey, an aircraft just flew into the WTC. Eckmann had the weather channel on TV, for operational reasons, and did not see the footage. He recalled the World War II bomber circa 1943 into the Empire State Building. He was aware of only one tower being hit. He kind of dismissed it as a tourist flight or a Cessna.

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At about 0910 they got battle stations—horn and yellow light. So he headed to the aircraft and strapped in and was talking to his crew chief. Is it related to New York? In back of his mind he was thinking Russian threat, the Soviets are doing this exercise. He was not told why he was on battle stations. All he hears is Quit 25, Quit 25, Battle Stations. Even the scramble order will just be a heading and an altitude. He was strapped in the aircraft in less than a minute, helmet off, engine cold. All he knew was that an aircraft had flown into the WTC. Was not aware of either AA77 or UA93 or that a second tower was hit.

Question re the Borgstrom role. He came running in and said looks like something big is going on. Eckmann still thinks something is going on with the Russians—a rogue crew. Then Borgstrom comes back and says they want all three of us to go. Then green light comes on and Borgstrom takes the spare.

The delay. Eckmann confirmed that the delay was on the order of 15 minutes. Eckmann asked his crew chief what kind of aircraft hit—a big airplane that went through the building. At that time Eckmann thought cruise missile. They get the green light. He recalled the scramble instructions as heading 010, max subsonic speed, which he said was unusual. He had never heard a speed given in any of his previous scrambles. The “max subsonic” told him it was important and that it was time to go. They could have given us supersonic, but that would have really decreased our range. Max subsonic is “mil power”, everything except the afterburners. “Military Power” is not set down anywhere, it is a power setting on the aircraft, full power without afterburners. That provides a speed of .98-.97 Mach.

There is some additional coordination among the pilots going on because they are a three-plane flight. They do that as they are taxiing out. Concurrently they are getting clearance from the tower. Just like a regular airplane they have to get a full up clearance. He was told they were cleared 090 for 60. That heading was based on a magnetic heading from the Langley TACAN. He was asked at this point if he now had conflicting instructions, 090 and 010. He responded “no I don’t.” 010 is the scramble order, basically a vector. 090 to 60 is a clearance level. When they take off into the aviation system he can’t just go blasting off and go his own way. He has to follow the FAA rules. They are a double edged sword, they fall under the FAA and under the military for our rules. The 090 was basically to get him out away from the ATC traffic

Every airport has a runway heading and that heading prevails briefly to a certain altitude before the ATC heading kicks in to effect. He recalled that heading to be to an altitude of 2000 feet. He can reach that altitude in seconds. So, if the scramble order had been the clearance he would have hit the end of the runway and turned to 010.

Mission. He doesn’t know what the scramble mission was. He thought they were going to New York and he actually made that comment to his crew chief. He was never told New York. His logic is that he had a 010 scramble order, the trade center has been hit, so he just assumed they were going to New York.

He recalled working with ATC on channel 13, 379.1, standard departure freq for Norfolk, while the other two pilots worked with HUNTRESS, [REDACTED] They talked among themselves on VHF, [REDACTED] In his statement to the Air Force he

E.O. 13526, section 1.4(a)

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said that pushed the pilots to HUNTRESS for "words." [orders, mission] He doesn't know what those words might have been. What he was working with ATC, was hey we need to turn north, 010. We went out 45 miles before he got turned on northern heading.

When shown the Norfolk Tower transcript that has a controller asking him what heading he would like, Eckmann responded that he doesn't recall hearing that and "he missed an opportunity there." He distinguished between FAA rules and military rules and FAA rules prevailed that day.

Eckmann was trying to get a clearance to head north. He thought they were on departure and he thought he said, hey we need to head north, now. Norfolk said stand by were are working it. In response to a specific question he said he was frustrated, very. But he can't just go beaming north. He was aware they were headed the wrong direction. Borgstrom told him NEADS wanted him to squawk Quad 7777s. Eckmann asked if he was sure and then made the change. AFIO is basically "world war III." It is now time for FAA to move people out of his way. It is a big deal. After that he thought he was cleared for 010. Even in training, and not in real world had he ever experienced Quad 7777 and AFIO. In back of his head he is thinking Russian threat.

Giant Killer. What he remembered was they just blew through Giant Killer space. He thought he went supersonic for a few minutes but then realized that if he want to New York he would run out of gas. He wasn't sure if the other two pilots did so.

Situational awareness. They had none concerning what was concurrently happening on the ground. From time off the runway they had no update. Derrig had slightly more (2d tower impact) because he delayed to put in his contacts prior to getting in the cockpit. Eckmann was unaware of any update that his co-pilots might have gotten from Huntress.

Slides. Staff walked Eckmann through slides which merged the radar track with concurrent conversations with Quit 25 [Eckmann] by air traffic controllers; copy attached. East Feeder asked what heading would you like? Eckmann is asked what are his options here. He responded, "that is when I should have been saying we want 010 for.... He acknowledged that that was an opportunity for him to change the heading. "It's sad to see I missed that opportunity, but I don't recall that at all."

Eckmann was asked if he recorded that day, he did not. He had two 8mm tapes one for radar and one for heads up displace.

At the point that ATC talks about Baltimore Eckmann does not understand why Baltimore is in the equation. He does not ever recall hearing "Baltimore." Nor did he recall the change to the north, except to remember that he was headed to the north and [eventually] Borgstrom and Derrig came back and said they [NEADS] want us to CAP. They were given lat/lon for the CAP not a location. He said "national security" at one point because he wasn't sure that FAA was getting the fact that they were getting ready to take over a chunk of airspace.

He reverted back to the Russian threat and he was thinking a cruise missile got in and we need to get here [DC]. No awareness on his part of the growing ground situation and no awareness of AA77 or UA93 or any threat to DC, north, south, east, or west.

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The wrong coordinates story. The fact that he went south and then north to go west. His bearing pointer [a navigation item in his guidance system] was stuck and would not point to the proper area. You don't know something is wrong until you are actually into a turn. He could get a distance, but not a bearing. On top of that we get the wrong lat/lon.

He organized the CAP because he was thinking cruise missile attack from the sea. Then he thought, on seeing the Pentagon, that's not a missile they hit it with a tanker truck. His whole mind set was that the Quit flight was setting up a defense. He could set it east or west of the city, that was his discretion.

As an aside he was asked how long it took to fly from Langley to DC. At .95-.98 Mach, about 12 minutes, was his answer.

He established his CAP over Washington DC based on a cruise missile threat and his situational awareness was that a missile had hit the WTC. Eckmann explained that a cruise missile would be low, would have a small cross-section, and could elude ground-based radar. Therefore, he wanted a track, a "hot track" that always had one pilot looking east and down and that is what he established. That track also allowed the other pilot to look to the west, but that was what he called the "cold track." The NEADS guidance was "set up the CAP." The rest was up to him, in conjunction with FAA to establish a block of altitude.

Targets of interest on CAP. Before HUNTRESS got involved they were getting targets from Washington Center. He recalled checking out helicopters, police and medical. At one time they had him "running" on his own wingman, Brad Derrig. They finally got that sorted out. Center did not direct him they simply informed him of situations in the air. His comment was "the radios were so busy" all of them together, plus Guard. It got to be overwhelming. He heard Washington Center and Approach on Guard [We separately know that Center, and others, were broadcasting messages on guard warning planes to stay out the DC area.]

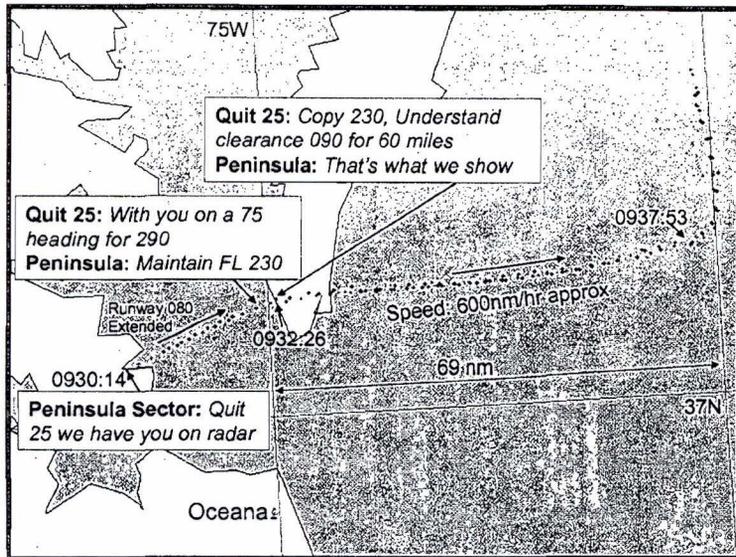
Eckmann recalled a conversation with the Secret Service at the request of Center to change to a discrete frequency. He was told that the Service had entered the building and wanted to talk to him. "We need to protect the house," is what he recalled hearing. His personal thought was if we get called in we are going to shoot something down, but he knew he had no authority to do so. Eckmann understood his ROE to be that he could shoot down a cruise missile at any time. He could not engage any other target during peace time. He could engage during transition ROE, but only with authority. Under war ROE anything was free game. On 9-11 he was not sure authority rested with NORAD. The Secret Service conversation led him to believe the ROE were in transition. He also said that he had a legal right and obligation to defend against the external threat and if he saw a "Bear" [Russian bomber] it was going down.

Concerning later events in the CAP, the Andrews pilots didn't know the Langley pilots were up, and vice versa. There was no Command and Control in the CAP; no CAP commander. There was no set CAP plan for defending Washington D.C.

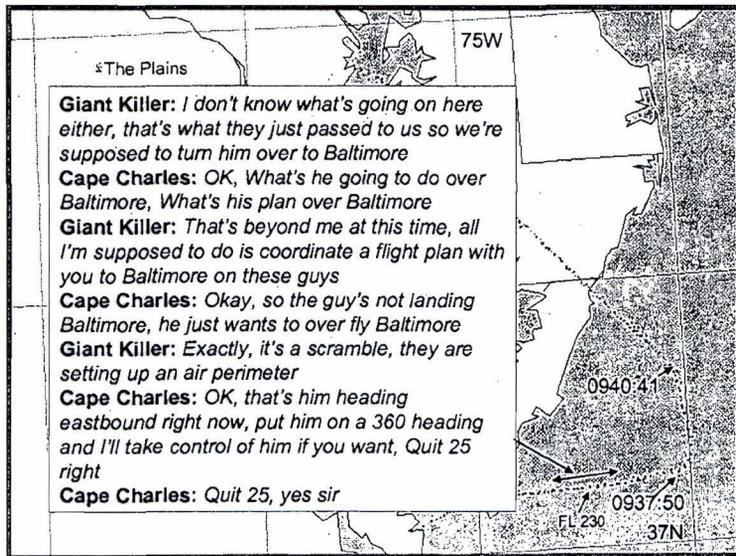
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Quit 25: Langley Scramble, Peninsula Sector, Norfolk TRACON
0930 - 0932 EDT



Quit 25: Langley Scramble, Washington Center
?0933? EDT, Continuation



Dean Eckmann, Interview 12/1/03

- Classified Areas:

missile loads - Actual config. + fuel
Authentication 50/50 got airborne

- actually got "alot" of scrambles (1, 2 even 3x week)
including Drug interdictions - NEVER COMAIR.

- only 1 west takeoff, all rest were East 080°

- Pre 9/11 Scrambles

1. Alert Line + Klaxon + lights (R/G/Y)

2. if scramble → launch immed.

if battle stations → get M Alc

* 3. Call in five words, basically our scramble order

~ Green light → out o'ban = 2 min or you doing something wrong

= call Tower for clearance, get initial T heading

5-6 min total if awake.

- Average Scramble is "head | ALT"

• pre 9/11 usually a "target of interest"; never a CAP.

9/11

- Senior Alert Pilot = DE JAP - B. Dewig SOF = CB

- CL when CB telling team "they want us to go."

But he has had a heads up and is ~~not~~ suited

* up. H3 Alc was "spare" ready to go except

for lack of missiles.

- Asked L. Cmd Post for "words": "heading 010;

MAX subsonic speed." Don't recall altitude.

→ very rare to have team pers speed.

* if they'd give us supersonic it would have greatly reduced our range.

• Mil Power = .98 M ≈ 1M @ Sea Level = 720 Nm/hr

= 10 mi/min

* .98 = 9 mi/min

* other Pilots listening + should

have heard "words"

- taxi out, coord how to do 3-ship

- coord. w/ L. tower for clearance

LT "clear to 090/60"

2

- 090/60 meant 090 radial for 60 mi (mag. head)
- 010 is my scramble order vector
- 090/60 is my clearance limit taking into effect the Air traffic at that given moment. = ATC Clearance, = FAA → Norfolk, Depart.

★ - Would have tuned to 010 immedi. had it been put in

Quit 25 DE - ATZ } VHF together
 26 BD - H
 27 CB - H

- I do know we need to go North
- AFIO: "Never, ever had it" → nor exercised it.

★ I am trying to get clearance to head N
 - CB says H wants 7777
 → still w/ departure ATZ, "we need a 010 now."
 - kept getting stand-by.
 - "Very frustrated" "I can't go bearing off on my own"

"Obvious, we were going in wrong direction"
 → 47 min. folder 9

- AFIO = FAA moves people out of the way
 as soon as we got 7777 (AFIO, ATZ come back your clear to go)

- Grant Killer = we just blow through it, not a prob

- Blower when we get N head, turn back off (prob. just me)

- Any SA @ this time? "No" - "we're still on a vector"
 "BD maybe, but from TV"
 "CB maybe, but from NADS on the ground"

- East Feeder asked "what heading would you like?"
- ↳ DE keeps E-bound. Could have headed 070 or N

- WRONG Coord:

Fire Control Nav. Computer (FCNC)

↳ can plug in Lat/Long

* My bearing pointer on FCNC was stuck - Fluke! Bearing would point to the entered Lat/Long

* transposed Lat/Long.

- today CAP to D.C. (very slow to save fuel)

today .98 = 12 min ↳ 17-20 min.

↳ but we have pre-programmed / pre planned

- ~~Course~~ not Nst DC.

↳ "Preferred Routing" in "Axe Orders" today, not 9/11

Stereo Flight Plans

CAP

- who's controlling CAP? "we're making this up as we go."

↳ Wash. Center + Wash Approach talking to DE

- set up counter-clock CAP to have "hot" look going east - towards water

* - W.A. tells DE they have unk. above W.H.

↳ goes down to ID → helicopters

↳ actually what happened was I was running on a M3 which turned out to be BD's - his own wing man.

W.A. didn't get his M3 for some reason.

↳ "Didn't direct, but informed"

- Radios got overwhelmed

- "Confusion factor was very high."

Discrete freq. → SS

- We need to protect the house.
- My personal thing is that we're going to be shooting something down

Andrews A/c:

- called on low intercepts (mostly H, some W.C.)
- H doesn't know about A's launch W.A.
- A's didn't know about us!
- don't think they had "Secrets" onboard w/ them to authenticate S/Down orders.
- H. should have tasked (ordered) their launch.

Any ROE or Shoot Down id'd as A x Free

- "I got no legal S/D"
- "But heard H on Guard that any A/c approaching w/in 30mi DC will be shot down" → no authentication
- "hard to say if I'd engage w/out auth. Had to tell if an A/c barely down would be going to WH or DCA."

20kbs
 says this
 is not
 H
 2 DC.

Wcap. Free

(or w. right)

→ Free = don't need higher auth. to engage

"Yes I did hear W Free on 7/11" "Prob. after Andrews"

DE: NO "CAP Commandy" - NO C² @ CAP!

- why sat on BS's for 14-15min, w/ no further intel!

- why we didn't get 7777 immediate.

"Initial C² overwhelmed"

No SA!

- Need better Ground Control radar

- A/c don't use interceptors

- Radio's Poop!

max speed 12-13 mi / minute

↳ 9:10 Scramble

9:14-9:15 Airborne (4 min to clear corridor)

Supersonic + 7777 fests. before launch

↳ 10-12 min after take off over P.