

Complete 911 Timeline - Pentagon

[\(8:00 a.m.-8:50 a.m.\) September 11, 2001: Defense Secretary Rumsfeld Holds Breakfast Meeting at Pentagon; Key Military Figures Present](#)



Thomas White. [Source: *US Department of Defense*] Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld hosts a breakfast meeting in his private dining room at the Pentagon. [*Associated Press*, 9/12/2001; *Larry King Live*, 12/5/2001; *9/11 Commission*, 3/23/2004] The meeting, which is attended by several members of Congress, is intended to discuss the Department of Defense's Quadrennial Defense Review. As well as the secretary of defense, others in attendance include Rumsfeld's senior military assistant, Navy Vice Admiral Edmund Giambastiani Jr.; Deputy Defense Secretary Paul Wolfowitz; Pete Geren, a special assistant to Rumsfeld; and Representatives John Mica (R-FL), Mark Steven Kirk (R-IL), Mac Thornberry (R-TX), Roger Wicker (R-MS), Robin Hayes (R-NC), Doug Bereuter (R-NE), John Hostettler (R-IN), Kay Granger (R-TX), John Shimkus (R-IL), Randy "Duke" Cunningham (R-CA), and Christopher Cox (R-CA). [*Powell Moore*, 9/10/2001; *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, 9/14/2001; *Powell Moore*, 9/19/2001; *Federal Computer Week*, 3/31/2003; *Vanity Fair*, 5/9/2003; *US Department of Defense*, 9/10/2004; *American Forces Press Service*, 9/8/2006] Secretary of the Army Thomas White, who is at the meeting, appears to say it is also attended by numerous key military figures, later telling PBS: "Don Rumsfeld had a breakfast, and virtually every one of the senior officials of the Department of Defense—service chiefs, secretary, deputy, everybody, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. And as that breakfast was breaking up, the first plane had hit the World Trade tower." [*PBS Frontline*, 10/26/2004; *PBS*, 10/26/2004] By "chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff," White presumably means Richard Myers, who is the acting chairman on this day, in place of Henry Shelton who is out of the country (see [7:15 a.m. September 11, 2001](#)). [*American Forces Press Service*, 9/8/2006] During the course of the meeting Rumsfeld predicts that some kind of "shocking" world event will occur in the near future (see [Before 8:46 a.m. September 11, 2001](#)). Most accounts suggest the meeting is adjourned soon after the time the first World Trade Center tower is hit, presumably around 8:50 a.m., though one report says it ends at about 9:00 a.m. Just prior to the meeting ending, Rumsfeld is handed a note informing him of the crash (see [Shortly After 8:46 a.m. September 11, 2001](#)). Giambastiani also sees this note. Whether the other people in attendance are notified of the crash at this time is unknown. [*Larry King Live*, 12/5/2001; *US Department of Defense*, 8/12/2002; *PBS*, 10/26/2004; *American Forces Press Service*, 9/8/2006] White will later recall, "We all went on with the day's business," after leaving the meeting. White heads off to give a speech at the nearby Army Navy Country Club. [*PBS Frontline*, 10/26/2004] Rumsfeld, Wolfowitz, and Giambastiani return to their offices. [*Vanity Fair*, 5/9/2003; *American Forces Press Service*, 9/8/2006] The members of Congress leave the building. [*Washington Post*, 1/9/2002] If Myers is at the meeting, as White appears to say, he must head promptly to Capitol Hill, as he enters another meeting in the offices of Senator Max Cleland (D-GA) before the time when the second WTC tower is hit (see [Shortly Before 9:00 a.m. September 11, 2001](#)). [*Armed Forces Radio And Television Service*, 10/17/2001; *American Forces Press Service*, 10/23/2001]

[Early Morning September 11, 2001: Helicopter Crew at Aviation Unit near Pentagon Away for 'Traffic Survey'](#)

A helicopter and its crew that are always on standby for "contingency" missions in the Washington area are away from base early this morning conducting a traffic survey, but apparently return at some point before the Pentagon is hit. The crew belongs to the 12th Aviation Battalion. [*US Army Center for Military History*, 11/14/2001; *Army Center of Military History*, 11/14/2001] The 12th Aviation Battalion is stationed at Davison Army Airfield at Fort Belvoir, located 12 miles south of the Pentagon. It is the aviation support unit for the Military District of Washington, and operates UH-1 "Huey" and UH-60 Black Hawk helicopters. [*Military District of Washington*, 8/2000] According to a chief warrant officer with the unit, the 12th Aviation Battalion has "two crews that are always on standby for any kind of contingency mission." It is one of these crews that is "out flying around doing a traffic survey." [*Army Center of Military History*, 11/14/2001] The exact time period during which the crew and their helicopter are away from base is unstated, but they apparently return to Davison Airfield before 9:37 a.m., when the Pentagon is hit (see [Shortly Before 9:37 a.m. September 11, 2001](#)). [*US Army Center for Military History*, 11/14/2001] They will be the first crew with the battalion to take off in support of the rescue operations at the Pentagon once the unit's aircraft are permitted to launch again following the attack.

Others members of the 12th Aviation Battalion are also away from base this morning, for weapons training (see [8:46 a.m.-9:37 a.m. September 11, 2001](#)). [[Army Center of Military History, 11/14/2001](#)]

8:30 a.m. September 11, 2001: Pentagon Command Center Director Leaves Post to Attend Meeting; Does Not Resume Duties until Attacks Have Ended



Captain Charles Leidig. [Source: US Navy] Brigadier General Montague Winfield, the deputy director for operations (DDO) in the National Military Command Center (NMCC) at the Pentagon, leaves his post to attend a pre-scheduled meeting, allowing a colleague, who only recently qualified to take over his position, to stand in for him, and not returning to his post until after the terrorist attacks have ended. [[9/11 Commission, 7/21/2003](#)]; [[9/11 Commission, 4/29/2004](#)]; [[9/11 Commission, 6/17/2004](#)]

Winfield Attends Air Force-Convened Meeting - Winfield leaves his post to attend what a 9/11 Commission memorandum will call “an unrelated, closed-door personnel meeting convened by the Air Force to discuss the rating of Air Force officers.” [[9/11 Commission, 7/21/2003](#)] Another Commission memorandum will state that this meeting is a “session for general officers who rated Air Force officers.” It is unclear whether the meeting takes place somewhere in the NMCC or outside the center. The Commission memorandum will only say that it takes place “elsewhere in [Joint Chiefs of Staff] spaces.” At least one of the NMCC’s other qualified DDOs, Brigadier General Norman Seip, is also attending it.

Winfield Asked Colleague to Replace Him on Previous Day - Winfield is temporarily replaced as DDO by Captain Charles Leidig. Leidig only joined the operations directorate of the Joint Chiefs of Staff in July 2001, when he assumed duties as the deputy for Command Center operations. In that, his usual role, he is responsible for the maintenance, operation, and training of watch teams for the NMCC. He qualified to stand in as the DDO in the NMCC about a month ago, in August 2001. The previous afternoon, Winfield asked Leidig to relieve him for a portion of his duty this morning, and Leidig agreed to do so.

Leidig Takes Over as DDO - As arranged, Leidig takes over from Winfield as DDO at 8:30 a.m., allowing Winfield to attend his meeting. Upon arrival at the NMCC, Leidig receives the intelligence and other turn over briefings. After seeing the reports of the plane crashes in New York on television, he will be responsible for convening a significant event conference (see [9:29 a.m.-9:34 a.m. September 11, 2001](#)), which he soon upgrades to an air threat conference (see [9:37 a.m.-9:39 a.m. September 11, 2001](#)). [[9/11 Commission, 4/29/2004](#)]; [[9/11 Commission, 6/17/2004](#)]

Winfield Does Not Resume Duties until Attacks Are Over - Even though it becomes obvious that a coordinated attack is under way when television shows the second plane hitting the World Trade Center at 9:03 a.m. (see [9:03 a.m. September 11, 2001](#)), Winfield apparently remains in his meeting instead of resuming his duties as DDO (see [\(Shortly After 9:03 a.m.\) September 11, 2001](#)). He will only take over from Leidig as DDO after Flight 93 crashes in Pennsylvania, apparently at around 10:30 a.m. (see [\(10:30 a.m.\) September 11, 2001](#)). [[9/11 Commission, 4/29/2004](#)]; [[9/11 Commission, 6/17/2004](#)] In later interviews for television, Winfield will give the impression that he remained in charge of the NMCC throughout the 9/11 attacks, and make no mention of having allowed a stand-in to take his place during this most critical period of time. [[CNN, 9/4/2002](#); [ABC News, 9/11/2002](#)]

8:30 a.m. September 11, 2001: Preparations Underway at Pentagon for President Bush’s Arrival Later in the Day



Fire truck parked outside the Pentagon. [Source: *Jon Culberson*] Preparations are underway at the Pentagon heliport, located about 150 feet from the west side of the building, for the expected arrival of President Bush at around midday. Bush had left from the Pentagon the previous day for his visit to Florida. He occasionally uses the Pentagon heliport rather than the White House grounds when going by helicopter to and from Air Force One at Andrews Air Force Base. [*Goldberg et al., 2007, pp. 64*] The White House grounds are unavailable because the annual Congressional picnic is scheduled to take place there this afternoon. The White House hosts this event for members of Congress and select staffers; around 1,200 guests are due to attend, until the attacks lead to it being canceled. [*Scripps Howard News Service, 9/11/2001; Scheib and Friedman, 2007, pp. 254-255; Hayes, 2007, pp. 344*] Three firefighters from the fire department at nearby Fort Myer had arrived at the Pentagon at around 7:30 a.m. to man the fire station next to the heliport. [*Newsweek, 9/28/2001; JEMS, 4/2002, pp. 22*]; [*Goldberg et al., 2007, pp. 65*] “Every day they have an aircraft flying, we’re there,” firefighter Alan Wallace will later explain. [*Pentagram, 9/14/2001*] Wallace decides to pull the fire truck out of the fire station and place it in a position more accessible to the heliport landing pad. [*First Due News, 4/17/2003*] The truck is equipped with the special chemical foam used in fighting jet fuel fires. [*Goldberg et al., 2007, pp. 65*] Wallace parks it about 15 feet from the Pentagon’s west wall, facing toward the landing pad. Wallace will recall that with many vehicles—belonging to the Secret Service and other agencies—expected to be around for the president’s arrival, he “wanted the crash truck out of the station and parked in a good location, for easy access to the heliport in case of an emergency.” [*First Due News, 4/17/2003*] When the Pentagon is hit at 9:37 a.m., the aircraft will crash into an area of the building next to the heliport (see [9:37 a.m. September 11, 2001](#)). [*USA Today, 9/12/2001; American Forces Press Service, 9/7/2006*]

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].” [*Washington Post, 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. 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. [*Connection Newspapers, 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.” [*MDW News Service, 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.” [[Pentagram, 5/7/1999](#); [Military District of Washington, 8/2000](#)]

(Before 8:46 a.m.) September 11, 2001: Defense Secretary Rumsfeld Reportedly Predicts Terror Attacks



John Mica. [*Source: Publicity photo*] Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld, Deputy Defense Secretary Paul Wolfowitz, Representatives Christopher Cox (R-CA) and John Mica (R-FL), and numerous others are meeting in Rumsfeld’s private Pentagon dining room, discussing missile defense (see [\(8:00 a.m.-8:50 a.m.\) September 11, 2001](#)). Rumsfeld later recalls, “I had said at an eight o’clock breakfast that sometime in the next two, four, six, eight, ten, twelve months there would be an event that would occur in the world that would be sufficiently shocking that it would remind people again how important it is to have a strong healthy Defense Department that contributes to—that underpins peace and stability in our world.” [[Larry King Live, 12/5/2001](#)] Wolfowitz recalls, “And we commented to them that based on what Rumsfeld and I had both seen and worked on the Ballistic Missile Threat Commission, that we were probably in for some nasty surprises over the next ten years.” [[Vanity Fair, 5/9/2003](#)] According to Mica, “the subject of the conversation Donald Rumsfeld was interested in was, the military had been downsized during the ‘90s since the fall of the Berlin Wall. And what we were going to do about [the] situation if we had another—the word [Rumsfeld] used was ‘incident.’ ... And he was trying to make certain that we were prepared for something that we might not expect.” [*US Congress. House. Oversight and Government Reform Committee, 8/1/2007*] There are confused accounts that Rumsfeld says, “I’ve been around the block a few times. There will be another event,” just before the Pentagon is hit by Flight 77 (see [\(Before 9:37 a.m.\) September 11, 2001](#)), but such comments may have been made around this time instead. Shortly afterwards, someone walks in with a note informing Rumsfeld that a plane has just hit the WTC (see [Shortly After 8:46 a.m. September 11, 2001](#)). [[Larry King Live, 12/5/2001](#); [9/11 Commission, 3/23/2004](#)] Mica later comments, “[L]ittle did we know that within a few minutes of the end of our conversation and actually at the end of our breakfast, that our world would change and that incident that we talked about would be happening.” [[US Department of Defense, 9/10/2004](#)]

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. [[Army Center of Military History, 11/14/2001](#) ; [Pentagram, 11/16/2001](#); [Fort Belvoir News, 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." [[Pentagram, 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](#)). [[Army Center of Military History, 11/14/2001](#)]; [[Fort Belvoir News, 1/18/2002](#)]

[\(8:48 a.m.-9:02 a.m.\) September 11, 2001: Navy Command Center Personnel Think WTC Crash Is an Accident](#)



Michael Allen Noeth. [[Source: Associated Press / Army Times](#)] Personnel in the Navy Command Center at the Pentagon, which is located on the first floor of the building's southwest face, learn of the attack on the WTC from television reports. The center is tasked with constantly monitoring global current events and also monitoring the latest status of all US Naval assets around the world. Its employees have to keep Navy leaders in Washington up to date on what is happening in the world as it directly relates to Navy operations and other security or military issues. Admiral Timothy Keating, who is the Navy's director of operations in the Pentagon, describes it as a "nerve center." Forty to 50 people man it constantly, 24 hours every day. Located within the center is the Chief of Naval Operations Intelligence Plot (CNO-IP), a small, highly secretive intelligence unit that constantly monitors geopolitical developments and military movements that could threaten American forces. The Navy Command Center has just been renovated, and its dozens of employees have been moving in during the past month. According to the Washington Post, the first the Command Center knows of the unfolding crisis is when Petty Officer Michael Allen Noeth sees the scene from the World Trade Center on the TV sets bolted to the wall, and shouts, "My God! What's happened?" Another employee Lt. Kevin Shaeffer later recalls, "We quickly knew what was going on in New York City after the first plane hit the first tower... and stood up a watch to start logging events and tracking things for the Navy." [[St. Petersburg Times, 9/14/2001](#); [Washington Post, 9/16/2001](#); [Washington Post, 1/20/2002](#); [Chips, 3/2003](#)] Despite the center supposedly being a "nerve center," those in it supposedly are not initially aware that this is a terrorist attack. According to Timothy Keating, who is presently in the Navy Command Center receiving his daily briefing, "We were quite bewildered. We couldn't understand how a pilot could make such a significant navigational error on a day when the skies were crystal clear blue." [[Washington Post, 9/16/2001](#); [American Forces Press Service, 9/11/2006](#)] All 30 people in the Command Center's main room watch the footage of the WTC on the large televisions there, whispering to each other, "Think it's an accident?" [[Virginian-Pilot, 9/7/2002](#)] However, according to the Washington Post, "A few old hands muttered to themselves that the Pentagon was probably next." [[Washington Post, 9/16/2001](#)] According to one officer, it is only when the second plane hits the WTC that there will be an "almost instantaneous recognition" that this is a terrorist attack. [[Daily Telegraph, 9/11/2002](#)] By that time, Keating will have gone back to his office. He too supposedly only realizes this is an attack when he sees television showing the second crash. [[American Forces Press Service, 9/11/2006](#)] Much of the Navy Command Center will be destroyed when the Pentagon is hit at 9:37 a.m. Forty-two of the 50 people working in it will be killed. [[Washington Post, 1/20/2002](#); [National Defense Magazine, 6/2003](#)]

[Shortly After 8:46 a.m. September 11, 2001: Defense Secretary Rumsfeld Learns of First WTC Attack](#)



Larry Di Rita. [Source: *US Department of Defense*] Larry Di Rita, a special assistant to Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld, has sent a note to Rumsfeld to inform him of the first plane hitting the World Trade Center. Although some initial reports suggest the WTC may have been hit by just a small plane, according to Victoria Clarke, the assistant secretary of defense for public affairs, “Even in the accidental crash scenario, the military might be involved in some way. Rumsfeld needed to know.” Rumsfeld, who is currently hosting a breakfast meeting with several members of Congress (see [\(8:00 a.m.-8:50 a.m.\) September 11, 2001](#)), later acknowledges having received this note. Yet apparently he does nothing in response. He recalls, “Everyone assumed it was an accident, the way it was described.” He says only that “we adjourned the meeting, and I went in to get my CIA briefing.” [[Larry King Live, 12/5/2001](#); [9/11 Commission, 3/23/2004](#); [Clarke, 2006, pp. 217-218](#); [Vogel, 2007, pp. 428](#)]

(8:48 a.m.-9:03 a.m.) September 11, 2001: Navy Officers at Pentagon Immediately Realize First Crash Is Terrorism, Suspect Pentagon Could Be Attacked



William Toti. [Source: *University of Texas-Pan American*] Those working in the office of the vice chief of naval operations (VCNO) at the Pentagon realize that the first plane hitting the World Trade Center is a terrorist attack as soon as they learn of it from television reports, and soon conclude that if this is an organized attack, the Pentagon will be a likely target. Those currently in the office, which is on the fourth floor of the Pentagon’s E-ring, include Captain William Toti, special assistant to the VCNO; Rear Admiral William Douglas Crowder, executive assistant to the VCNO; Commander David Radi, deputy executive assistant to the VCNO; Dee Karnhan, the VCNO’s secretary; and the VCNO’s writer, whom Toti will later refer to only as “Chief LaFleur.” Admiral William Fallon, the VCNO, is currently down the hall in the office of Admiral Vern Clark, the chief of naval operations. [[US Naval Historical Center, 10/10/2001](#); [Washington Post, 11/17/2006](#)]

'Everyone' in Office Realizes First Crash Is Terrorism - Toti will later recall that the morning has, until now, been “very routine, very normal.” The first sign of anything unusual is when he hears LaFleur yelling from the VCNO’s outer office, “Holy sh_t, look at that!” LaFleur has noticed CNN showing the burning WTC on television. The television in the VCNO’s outer office is kept on all the time. According to Toti, TV reports will be “our first indication when major events are happening in the world.” Toti goes to the outer office and turns up the volume on the TV, to find out what is happening. He will recall that CNN is reporting that “a small plane had run into the World Trade Center. They were theorizing that it was probably because a navigational beacon had malfunctioned.” Toti will comment that he is “a private pilot, and I know there is no way in hell that any pilot is going to run into the World Trade Center on a clear day like that, navigational beacon or not. It was clear to me, as I think it was to everyone else in the room, that this was not an accident: somebody had collided with the World Trade Center on purpose.” Toti will add: “We began talking about that immediately... and we knew without a doubt that this was a terrorist attack. The question was, ‘Is this it, or is there more to it?’”

Officers Conclude Pentagon Is a Likely Target - Those in the office start discussing whether there could be more attacks. Toti will recall: “We started talking about options. If [the terrorists] are hitting New York, the only other place that makes sense to hit—New York is the capital of our economy, Washington is the capital of our government—okay, they’re going to hit Washington if this is an organized attack.” LaFleur says that if the terrorists are going to attack Washington, “Then they’re going to go after the White House,” but Toti disagrees, saying, “No, there’s only one building in DC that shares the characteristics of the World Trade Center.”

Toti notes that the WTC is “symbolic, it houses a lot of people, and it’s easy to hit from the air.” He will later state, “If you go through the list of buildings in DC—remember, we are doing this before the second tower is hit—we’re saying symbolic: White House, Capitol building, the Pentagon; houses a lot of people: the Pentagon; easy to hit by air: Pentagon and the Capitol, too.” Toti therefore concludes: “The only building that makes sense is the Pentagon.... At this point, if [the terrorists] hit any place, they are going to hit this building.” While those in the VCNO’s office are discussing how the Pentagon is “a likely target,” they see the second plane hitting the WTC live on television, at 9:03 a.m. [[US Naval Historical Center, 10/10/2001](#)] Despite their concerns, no steps will be taken to evacuate the Pentagon or alert workers there before the building is attacked (see [Before 9:37 a.m. September 11, 2001](#)). [[Vogel, 2007, pp. 429](#)]

Officer Astonished When Pentagon Hit, 'Exactly Like We Had Visualized' - Toti will later recall the unease he feels when the Pentagon is hit at 9:37 a.m., just as he and his colleagues predicted. After the Pentagon is hit, Toti will say, he is “out there saying, ‘Am I dreaming?’ I’m saying: ‘Is this really happening? Am I dreaming? How could we have predicted it like that? How could we have known it was coming? How could this be happening exactly like we had visualized just moments before?’ But it did.” He will say that “for us, this [attack] was unfolding as if we were writing a script. It was really bizarre. To this day, I’m shocked that we had got it so right so early.” [[US Naval Historical Center, 10/10/2001](#)]

(8:48 a.m.) September 11, 2001: Pentagon Command Center Workers Apparently Learn of WTC Attack from TV, Think It Is an Accident

In the National Military Command Center (NMCC) at the Pentagon, personnel apparently become aware of the first attack on the World Trade Center from watching the reports on television. According to Steve Hahn, an operations officer there, “We monitor the television networks in the center, and along with the rest of America we saw the smoke pouring from the tower.” Dan Mangino, who is also an operations officer at the NMCC, says, “At first, we thought it was a terrible accident.” [[American Forces Press Service, 9/7/2006](#)] The 9/11 Commission later says, “Most federal agencies learned about the crash in New York from CNN.” [[9/11 Commission, 7/24/2004, pp. 35](#)] Whether the NMCC was already aware that a hijacking was underway is unclear. According to military instructions, the NMCC is “the focal point within Department of Defense for providing assistance” in response to hijackings in US airspace, and is supposed to be “notified by the most expeditious means by the FAA.” [[US Department of Defense, 6/1/2001](#)] Boston Air Traffic Control Center started notifying the chain of command of the suspected hijacking of Flight 11 more than 20 minutes earlier (see [8:25 a.m. September 11, 2001](#)). And at 8:32, the FAA’s Command Center in Herndon informed FAA headquarters of the possible hijacking (see [8:28 a.m. September 11, 2001](#)). Yet, according to the 9/11 Commission, although the “FAA headquarters began to follow the hijack protocol,” it “did not contact the NMCC to request a fighter escort.” Supposedly, the first that the military learned of the hijacking was when Boston Air Traffic Control Center contacted NORAD’s Northeast Air Defense Sector (NEADS) about it, at around 8:37 a.m. (see [\(8:37 a.m.\) September 11, 2001](#)). The earliest time mentioned by the 9/11 Commission that the NMCC learns of the Flight 11 hijacking is 9 a.m. (see [9:00 a.m. September 11, 2001](#)). [[9/11 Commission, 7/24/2004, pp. 19-20 and 35](#)]

(Between 8:49 a.m. and 9:02 a.m.) September 11, 2001: NMCC Responds to First Crash at WTC, Notifies Senior Pentagon Officials

Officers in the National Military Command Center (NMCC) at the Pentagon begin notifying senior Pentagon officials about the plane crashing into the World Trade Center after learning of this from television, but they are apparently unaware of the hijacking of Flight 11. [[9/11 Commission, 7/21/2003](#)]; [[9/11 Commission, 4/29/2004](#)]; [[9/11 Commission, 7/24/2004, pp. 35](#)] The NMCC’s three main missions are monitoring worldwide events for the Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS), maintaining a strategic watch component, and maintaining a crisis response component. The NMCC has live feeds from numerous television stations, and the operations team on duty there learned from CNN that an aircraft had hit the WTC (see [\(8:48 a.m.\) September 11, 2001](#)).

NMCC Directors Notify Senior Pentagon Officials of Crash - In response, members of the operations team monitor media reports and begin making notifications up the chain of command. [[9/11 Commission, 7/21/2003](#)]; [[9/11 Commission, 4/29/2004](#)] Captain Charles Leidig, who is currently standing in temporarily as deputy director for operations in the NMCC (see [8:30 a.m. September 11, 2001](#)), will later recall, “Initially... the National Military Command Center was primarily a means to notify senior leadership that, in fact, an event had occurred.” [[9/11 Commission, 6/17/2004](#)] Leidig and Commander Patrick Gardner, the assistant deputy director for operations, start notifying those on the internal JCS notification list, including the office of the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, about the crash. They also notify the office of the secretary of defense. Based on incorrect information being reported on television, Leidig tells the senior Pentagon officials that a small airplane has crashed into one of the towers of the WTC. [[9/11 Commission, 4/29/2004](#)]; [[9/11 Commission, 7/24/2004, pp. 35](#)]

NMCC Unaware of Flight 11 Hijacking - According to military instructions, “the NMCC is the focal point within [the] Department of Defense for providing assistance” in response to aircraft hijackings in US airspace, and, “In the event of a hijacking, the NMCC will be notified by the most expeditious means by the FAA” (see [June 1, 2001](#)). [[US Department of Defense, 6/1/2001](#)] However, while details of the hijacking of Flight 11 have been circulating within the FAA, the 9/11 Commission will say it “found no evidence that the hijacking was reported to any other agency in Washington before 8:46.” The NMCC apparently learns of the hijacking for the first time when one of its officers calls the FAA at 9:00 a.m. (see [9:00 a.m. September 11, 2001](#)). Leidig will recall that, before the second plane hits the WTC at 9:03 a.m., he and Gardner think it is “something unusual... that a light plane had crashed into the WTC and that there was a report of a hijacking.” [[9/11 Commission, 4/29/2004](#)]; [[9/11 Commission, 7/24/2004, pp. 35, 462](#)]

(8:50 a.m.-Shortly After 9:03 a.m.) September 11, 2001: Director of Operations of the Joint Staff Does Not Go to NMCC after Learning of WTC Crash; Keeps Dental Appointment Instead



Scott Fry. [Source: NATO] Vice Admiral Scott Fry, a top official at the Pentagon with important responsibilities, goes to a dental appointment and only becomes involved with the response to the attacks after the second crash in New York. [[Creed and Newman, 2008, pp. 4-6](#)] Fry is the director of operations of the Joint Staff, a post he has held since 1998. [[US Department of Defense, 9/23/1998](#); [Stars and Stripes, 10/4/2001](#)] In this position, he is responsible for running the National Military Command Center (NMCC)—“the Pentagon’s highly secure nerve center”—and the Executive Support Center (ESC)—a suite of rooms at the Pentagon “where the secretary of defense, the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and other senior officials would meet to discuss urgent matters.” [[Creed and Newman, 2008, pp. 5-6](#)] He is due to leave shortly for Italy, where he is to take up an important Navy command. [[Department of Defense, 9/4/2001](#); [Stars and Stripes, 10/4/2001](#); [Creed and Newman, 2008, pp. 4-5](#)] Fry is anxious to go to the dentist before leaving for Italy. As he is about to leave his office for a 9:00 a.m. appointment, his executive assistant draws his attention to the television coverage of the first attack in New York. Reportedly believing the crash was “probably just a freak accident,” instead of heading to the NMCC or the ESC, Fry continues to the clinic (which is presumably within the Pentagon), and is in the dentist’s chair when the second attack occurs. His assistant then calls him on his cell phone to alert him to this. Fry reportedly concludes: “One airplane hitting a skyscraper, that was damned suspicious. But two... there was no doubt about it. It had to be a terrorist attack.” He promptly cancels his appointment and hurries to the NMCC. From there, he goes upstairs to the ESC, where a group is already assembling (see [Shortly After 9:03 a.m. September 11, 2001](#)). In the ESC, a “video teleconference link could connect them to the White House, the State Department, the CIA, and military commanders throughout the world.” There, Fry discusses events in New York with Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld’s aide Stephen Cambone. But, reportedly, what the men know is “not much, except what they could see on TV.” [[Creed and Newman, 2008, pp. 4-6](#)] Only a few months previously, on June 1, 2001, a new Defense Department directive on dealing with domestic hijackings was issued under Fry’s signature (see [June 1, 2001](#)). [[US Department of Defense, 6/1/2001](#)]

(Shortly After 8:51 a.m.) September 11, 2001: Pentagon Command Center Possibly Knows Flight 77 Is Hijacked, yet NEADS Not Notified

An article in the New York Times will later suggest that officials in the Pentagon’s National Military Command Center (NMCC) promptly become aware of the problems with Flight 77, long before NORAD’s Northeast Air Defense Sector (NEADS) is alerted to the flight. The article will state, “During the hour or so that American Airlines Flight 77 [is] under the control of hijackers, up to the moment it struck the west side of the Pentagon, military officials in [the NMCC are] urgently talking to law enforcement and air traffic control officials about what to do.” [[New York Times, 9/15/2001](#)] This appears consistent with what would be expected under normal procedures. According to the FAA’s acting Deputy Administrator Monte Belger: “Prior to 9/11, FAA’s traditional communication channel with the military during a crisis had been through the National Military Command Center (NMCC). They were always included in the communication net that was used to manage a hijack incident.” He will say that, since the FAA does not have direct dedicated communication links with NORAD, in a hijack scenario the NMCC has “the responsibility to coordinate [the Defense Department]’s response to requests from the FAA or the FBI.” [[9/11 Commission, 6/17/2004](#)]; [9/11 Commission, 6/17/2004](#)] NEADS reportedly is not alerted to Flight 77 until significantly later: at 9:24 a.m. by some accounts (see [9:24 a.m. September 11, 2001](#)), or, according to other accounts, at 9:34 a.m., when it only learns that Flight 77 is missing (see [9:34 a.m. September 11, 2001](#)). [[North American Aerospace Defense Command, 9/18/2001](#); [9/11 Commission, 6/17/2004](#)]

(After 8:55 a.m.) September 11, 2001: Serious Communications Problems Experienced in Washington Area, Affect Key Government Officials

In the Washington, DC, area, members of the public, emergency responders, and government officials experience serious communications problems. Telephone and cell phone services around the capital remain unavailable to members of the public for most of the day. [[Verton, 2003, pp. 149](#)]

■Particular problems are experienced around the Pentagon. Reportedly, cellular and landline telephone communications there are “virtually unreliable or inaccessible during the first few hours of the response,” after it is hit at 9:37 (see [After 9:37 a.m. September](#)

11, 2001). [[US Department of Health and Human Services, 7/2002, pp. C36](#)]

Some senior government officials also experience communications difficulties:

■CIA Director George Tenet has problems using his secure phone while heading from a Washington hotel back to CIA headquarters, located about eight miles outside Washington (see [\(8:55 a.m.-9:15 a.m.\) September 11, 2001](#)). [[Independent, 11/6/2002; Tenet, 2007, pp. 161-162](#)]

■Secretary of State Colin Powell has to take a seven-hour flight from Peru, to get back to the capital. He later complains that, during this flight, “because of the communications problems that existed during that day, I couldn’t talk to anybody in Washington” (see [\(12:30 p.m.-7:30 p.m.\) September 11, 2001](#)). [[ABC News, 9/11/2002](#)]

■Between the time of the second WTC attack and about 9:45 a.m., Vice President Dick Cheney, who is at the White House, has problems reaching Speaker of the House Dennis Hastert at the US Capitol by secure telephone (see [\(9:04 a.m.-9:45 a.m.\) September 11, 2001](#)). [[Daily Herald \(Arlington Heights\), 9/11/2002; Hayes, 2007, pp. 336-337](#)]

■Even President Bush experiences difficulties communicating with Washington after leaving a school in Florida, and subsequently while flying on Air Force One (see [\(9:34 a.m.-11:45 a.m.\) September 11, 2001](#)). [[Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, 9/10/2006](#)]
A classified after-action report will later be produced, based on observations from a National Airborne Operations Center plane launched near Washington shortly before the time of the Pentagon attack (see [\(Shortly Before 9:37 a.m.\) September 11, 2001](#)).
According to one government official, the report indicates that the nation was “deaf, dumb, and blind” for much of the day. [[Verton, 2003, pp. 150-151](#)]
Members of the public in New York City also experience communications problems throughout the day, particularly with cell phones (see [\(After 10:00 a.m.\) September 11, 2001](#)).

[9:00 a.m. September 11, 2001: Pentagon Command Center Learns of Flight 11 Hijacking, but FAA Says It Does Not Need Assistance](#)



Ryan Gonsalves. [[Source: Institute for the Study of War](#)] An officer in the National Military Command Center (NMCC) at the Pentagon learns, during a phone call to the FAA, of the hijacking of Flight 11, but the FAA tells him it does not need any help dealing with this, as everything seems to be under control. [[9/11 Commission, 4/29/2004](#) ; [9/11 Commission, 7/24/2004, pp. 35](#)]
NMCC Officer Calls FAA for Information - After those in the NMCC learned from television that an aircraft had crashed into the World Trade Center (see [\(8:48 a.m.\) September 11, 2001](#)), Lieutenant Colonel Ryan Gonsalves, the senior operations officer there, began gathering up as much information as he could on the crisis. One of the phone calls he makes is to the FAA operations center at the agency’s Washington, DC, headquarters. The employee at the operations center who answers the call tells Gonsalves that the FAA has had a report of a hijacking on a plane that departed Boston. [[9/11 Commission, 4/29/2004](#) ; [9/11 Commission, 5/5/2004](#)]
FAA Says It Does Not Need Help - The FAA employee apparently does not connect the plane crashing into the WTC with the hijacked Flight 11, which they claim is still airborne and heading for New York’s JFK International Airport. The entry in the senior operations officer’s log about the call will state: “9:00 NMCC called FAA, briefed of explosion at WTC possibly from aircraft crash. Also, hijacking of American Flight 11 from Boston to LA, now en route to Kennedy.” [[9/11 Commission, 7/24/2004, pp. 462](#)]
Furthermore, when Gonsalves asks if the FAA needs any assistance dealing with the hijacking, the operations center employee replies, “No,” and says the pilot “had called in and said everything was under control, and he was going to land at New York shortly.” [[9/11 Commission, 4/29/2004](#) ; [9/11 Commission, 5/5/2004](#)]
The possibility of scrambling fighter jets is not discussed during the phone call. Even though military instructions state that the NMCC is to be “notified by the most expeditious means by the FAA” in response to aircraft hijackings in US airspace (see [June 1, 2001](#)), this call, according to the 9/11 Commission Report, appears to be the first time the FAA informs the NMCC of the hijacking of Flight 11. [[US Department of Defense, 6/1/2001](#) ; [9/11 Commission, 7/24/2004, pp. 35](#)]

[\(9:00 a.m.-9:37 a.m.\) September 11, 2001: Chief of Naval Operations Continues with Budget Meeting while US Is Under Attack](#)

The Chief of Naval Operations Admiral Vern Clark, the Navy's top officer, is in his office on the fourth floor of the Pentagon for a budget meeting. Although it is clear after the second WTC tower is hit that the US is under attack, Clark apparently does nothing in response, and no attempt is made to evacuate him from the Pentagon. Reportedly, when the Pentagon is hit at 9:37, he is "receiving a budget briefing." It is only then that a member of his staff enters his office and tells him, "You've got to evacuate." Clark will then head to the Pentagon's National Military Command Center (NMCC), where he meets with other senior Department of Defense leaders, and decides to re-establish the Navy's command center in another secure location in Washington, DC (see [After 9:37 a.m. September 11, 2001](#)). Clark later reflects, "There has never been an experience like this in my lifetime. We were thinking about the immediate protection of the United States of America." [[Sea Power, 1/2002](#); [National Public Radio, 6/14/2007](#)]

(9:00 a.m.-9:37 a.m.) September 11, 2001: Top Navy Official Unconcerned about Danger of Attack on Pentagon



Timothy Keating. [Source: Department of Defense] Admiral Timothy Keating, who is the Navy's director of operations in the Pentagon, is back in his fourth-floor office for a 9:00 a.m. meeting with David Newton, the US ambassador to Yemen. Keating has just returned from the Navy Command Center on the Pentagon's first floor, where he'd received his daily briefing, and where he'd seen the television reports of the first crash at the World Trade Center (see [\(8:48 a.m.-9:02 a.m.\) September 11, 2001](#)). Despite seeing the second plane hitting the WTC on television, Keating and Newton reportedly do not question their own safety at the Pentagon. Though it is now obvious that the US is under attack, they start discussing the upcoming first anniversary of the terrorist attack on the USS *Cole*. In 2002, Keating will recall, "We were discussing the fact that the *Cole* attack was coming up on a year's anniversary—those were almost our exact words at the moment the plane impacted [the Pentagon]," which happens at 9:37. But in 2006, Keating will give a different account, telling Washington Post Radio that, after seeing the second crash on TV, he understands this is an attack. In response, he claims, he makes some phone calls and is on his way back to the Navy Command Center when the Pentagon is hit. [[Sea Power, 1/2002](#); [Shipmate, 9/2006](#)]; [American Forces Press Service, 9/11/2006](#)] The Command Center is mostly destroyed in the attack, and 42 of the 50 people working in it are killed. [[Washington Post, 1/20/2002](#); [National Defense Magazine, 6/2003](#)]

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. Coppage / 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. [[Historical Office, Office of the Secretary of Defense, 11/5/2001](#); [Naval Historical Center, 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. [[American Forces Press Service, 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. [[Historical Office, Office of the Secretary of Defense, 11/5/2001](#); [Naval Historical Center, 12/21/2001](#)]

(9:00 a.m.) September 11, 2001: Air Force Crisis Action Team Activated



Matt Swanson. [[Source: Iowa State University](#)]The Air Force's Crisis Action Team (CAT) at the Pentagon is activated. The CAT is under the command of the US Air Force chief of staff, and reportedly it "coordinates Air Force reaction to anything that might be a threat to the United States." After hearing the CAT has been activated, Major Donna Nicholas heads down to the Air Force Operations Center in the basement of the Pentagon's C Ring, where the CAT is carrying out its activities. She arrives there after 9:03, when the second WTC tower is hit, and someone tells her, "Just so you know, we're considering that we're under attack." The Operations Center is "a flurry of activity as Air Force officials worked to gather information, both from the media and from their own intelligence sources." [[Dover Post, 9/19/2001](#); [Syracuse University Magazine, 12/2001](#)] The Defense Department's own book about the Pentagon attack will describe that, prior to the Pentagon being hit, "Members of the Air Force Crisis Action Team [have] already begun to assemble [in the Operations Center] for a 10:00 a.m. briefing; one of their responsibilities [is] to work with the Army to provide assistance to civil authorities in New York." [[Goldberg et al., 2007, pp. 136](#)] The CAT's usual first in charge is away. So Lieutenant Colonel Matt Swanson, its second in command, has to take their place supervising emergency operations for the Air Force. But he is only called from his Pentagon office to the Air Force Operations Center to join the CAT after the time of the second attack. [[Prospectus, 9/2006, pp. 3-6](#)] Similarly, James Roche and John Jumper, the Air Force secretary and chief of staff respectively, will not arrive at the center until after the Pentagon is hit at 9:37 (see [\(Shortly After 9:37 a.m.\) September 11, 2001](#)).

(9:00 a.m.-9:15 a.m.) September 11, 2001: Top Air Force Officials Learn of Attacks on WTC, Yet Continue with Scheduled Meeting



General Lance W. Lord. [[Source: Air Force Space Command](#)]At the Pentagon, several top Air Force officials together learn of the attacks on the World Trade Center, yet initially appear to make only limited efforts toward an emergency response. In the Air Force Council conference room, located in the Pentagon basement, General John Jumper is chairing his first staff meeting as Air Force chief of staff. [[Goldberg et al., 2007, pp. 136](#)] Jumper only became chief of staff five days earlier, on September 6, and this is his first official duty day. [[Air Force Magazine, 10/2001](#); [Midland Reporter-Telegram, 4/2/2002](#); [Air Force Space Command News Service, 9/5/2002](#)] Others in the meeting include Secretary of the Air Force James Roche and Lance Lord, the assistant vice chief of staff of the Air Force. The meeting has just gone through its intelligence briefing, and then, at about 9:00 a.m., a technician turns the large briefing screen on to CNN. It displays the coverage of the burning North Tower of the World Trade Center. Everyone then sees as the second plane crashes into the South Tower. Jumper declares, "We're under attack." [[Air Force Space Command News Service, 9/5/2002](#); [Goldberg et al., 2007, pp. 136](#)] Tim Green, the assistant executive to the Air Force chief of staff who is also in the meeting, later recalls: "Everyone in the room knew instantly that we were at war. It's amazing to watch people in that situation, they immediately shift gears from whatever they were doing to do what needed to be done.... We set up a Crisis Action Team down in our

Operations Center and they began working immediately.” [[Midland Reporter-Telegram, 4/2/2002](#)] Another report confirms that the Air Force’s Crisis Action Team (CAT) is activated at “about 9 a.m.” (see [[9:00 a.m. September 11, 2001](#)]). [[Dover Post, 9/19/2001](#)] However, according to the Defense Department’s own book about the Pentagon attack, “After viewing televised news for about eight minutes,” Jumper resumes his meeting. He concludes it quickly, and then departs for his office. Jumper and Roche will not arrive at the Pentagon’s Air Force Operations Center, from where the CAT is carrying out its emergency operations, until after 9:37, when the Pentagon is hit (see [[Shortly After 9:37 a.m. September 11, 2001](#)]). [[Goldberg et al., 2007, pp. 136](#)]

9:03 a.m. September 11, 2001: Pentagon Command Center Staff See Second Attack on WTC, Yet Accounts Conflict Over Urgency of Their Response

Those in the National Military Command Center (NMCC) within the Pentagon see the second plane hitting the World Trade Center live on television. According to Dan Mangino, an operations officer at the center, the staff there had thought the first WTC crash was a “terrible accident,” but after seeing the second one, “we knew immediately that it was a terrorist attack.” The American Forces Press Service later reports, “Personnel in the center shifted into hyperdrive.... Phones in the center began ringing off the hook.” Mangino says he initiates “the process to stand up a working group in advance of the direction that would come down later.” One of his deputies is responsible for this process. Yet, despite this supposed urgency, Mangino later recalls that he “knew he would have little time in the days ahead, so he quickly ran to the concourse to get some money out of an automated teller machine.” He will not arrive back at the NMCC until after the Pentagon is hit. [[American Forces Press Service, 9/7/2006](#)] Brigadier General Montague Winfield had earlier on allowed a colleague to temporarily take over from him as the NMCC’s deputy director for operations (see [[8:30 a.m. September 11, 2001](#)]). Yet, despite the obvious emergency now taking place, he does not retake charge of the center until more than an hour later, at around 10:15-10:30 a.m. (see [[Shortly After 9:03 a.m. September 11, 2001](#)]). [[9/11 Commission, 6/17/2004](#)] Furthermore, according to the 9/11 Commission, the NMCC does not begin a “significant event” conference call in response to the attacks until 9:29 a.m., which is 26 minutes after the South Tower is hit (see [[9:29 a.m.-9:34 a.m. September 11, 2001](#)]). [[9/11 Commission, 6/17/2004](#)]; [[9/11 Commission, 7/24/2004, pp. 37](#)]

Between 9:03 a.m. and 9:37 a.m. September 11, 2001: Defense Official at Pentagon Says, ‘We’re Next’

After the second WTC tower is hit, NBC News correspondent Jim Miklaszewski is heading down a hall inside the Pentagon when he runs into a Defense Department official. The official says he doesn’t yet know anything specific about the attack. But, he says, it is so coordinated that “[i]f I were you I would stay off the E-ring [the outermost corridor of the Pentagon] today, because we’re next.” According to Miklaszewski, the official had no specific information, “that was just his gut instinct.” [[Gilbert et al., 2002, pp. 43](#)]

Between 9:03 a.m. and 9:35 a.m. September 11, 2001: Rumsfeld Aides Discuss Pentagon as Possible Target



Edmund Giambastiani, Jr. [[Source: US Department of Defense](#)] Navy Vice Admiral Edmund Giambastiani Jr., who is Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld’s senior military assistant, returned to his office after attending a breakfast meeting hosted by the secretary of defense (see [[8:00 a.m.-8:50 a.m. September 11, 2001](#)]). After learning the second WTC tower has been hit, he says, he realizes “it [is] no longer an accident.” Stephen Cambone, who is Rumsfeld’s closest aide, comes to Giambastiani’s office, which is located near to the defense secretary’s office. Reportedly, he is there “to discuss the Pentagon as a potential target and their course of action if it was attacked.” Then, “Minutes later,” the attack on the Pentagon occurs. [[American Forces Press Service, 9/8/2006](#)] Cambone is also reported as being at the Pentagon’s Executive Support Center (ESC), located down the hallway from Rumsfeld’s office, some time between when the attacks on the South Tower and the Pentagon occur (see [[Shortly After 9:03 a.m. September 11, 2001](#)]). [[Clarke, 2006, pp. 219-220](#)] It is unclear whether he goes to the ESC before meeting with Giambastiani, or afterwards. Despite Cambone’s concern that the Pentagon could be a target, no attempt is made to evacuate the place before it is struck (see [[Before 9:37 a.m. September 11, 2001](#)]), and it does not appear that any alarms are sounded either. [[Newsday, 9/23/2001](#)]

(Shortly After 9:03 a.m.) September 11, 2001: Deputy Defense Secretary Wolfowitz Continues Routine Meeting; Defense Secretary Rumsfeld Stays in His Office

Deputy Defense Secretary Paul Wolfowitz has recently left a meeting with Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld around 8:46 a.m. (see [\(Before 8:46 a.m.\) September 11, 2001](#)). Wolfowitz will later recall: “We were having a meeting in my office. Someone said a plane had hit the World Trade Center. Then we turned on the television and we started seeing the shots of the second plane hitting, and this is the way I remember it. It’s a little fuzzy.... There didn’t seem to be much to do about it immediately and we went on with whatever the meeting was.” [*Vanity Fair*, 5/9/2003] Around this time, Rumsfeld is receiving an intelligence briefing from Denny Watson, his regular CIA briefer. [*Rumsfeld*, 2011, pp. 335] Rumsfeld will recall, “I was in my office with a CIA briefer and I was told that a second plane had hit the other tower.” [*9/11 Commission*, 3/23/2004] Assistant Secretary of Defense for Public Affairs Victoria Clarke headed to Rumsfeld’s office right after the second plane hit. She will recall: “A couple of us had gone into... Secretary Rumsfeld’s office, to alert him to that, tell him that the crisis management process was starting up. He wanted to make a few phone calls.” Rumsfeld tells Clarke and his personal chief of staff, Larry Di Rita, who is with her, to go to the Executive Support Center (ESC) located near his office and wait for him. “In the meantime, he would get his daily intelligence briefing, which was already scheduled for nine thirty.” Di Rita and Clarke head off down the hallway to the ESC, while Rumsfeld stays in his office. Apparently Rumsfeld will not go to the ESC until around 10:15 a.m. (see [\(10:00 a.m.-10:30 a.m.\) September 11, 2001](#)). [*WBZ Radio 1030 (Boston)*, 9/15/2001; *Clarke*, 2006, pp. 218-219]

(Shortly After 9:03 a.m.) September 11, 2001: Pentagon Command Center Director Does Not Return to Post, Even though Officials Conclude that US Is under Attack



Brigadier General Montague Winfield. [*Source: US Army*] Brigadier General Montague Winfield, the deputy director for operations (DDO) in the National Military Command Center (NMCC) at the Pentagon, apparently remains in a pre-scheduled meeting that is unrelated to the terrorist attacks and does not resume his key duties as DDO, even though others in the NMCC have concluded that the US is under attack. [*9/11 Commission*, 4/29/2004 ; *American Forces Press Service*, 9/7/2006] Since around 8:30 a.m., Winfield has been attending what the 9/11 Commission will describe as a “closed-door personnel meeting convened by the Air Force to discuss the rating of Air Force officers.” Captain Charles Leidig, who only qualified to stand in as the DDO about a month previously, has taken over Winfield’s position while he is in the meeting (see [8:30 a.m. September 11, 2001](#)).

NMCC Officers Realize US Is under Attack - Leidig will later recall that after those in the NMCC see Flight 175 crashing into the World Trade Center live on television at 9:03 a.m., “[t]o him it was obvious it was a terrorist attack or a coordinated attack.” [*9/11 Commission*, 7/21/2003 ; *9/11 Commission*, 4/29/2004] Other officers in the NMCC also realize this is a terrorist attack (see [9:03 a.m. September 11, 2001](#)). [*American Forces Press Service*, 9/7/2006] Winfield himself will later describe, “When the second aircraft flew into the second tower, it was at that point that we realized that the seemingly unrelated hijackings that the FAA was dealing with were in fact a part of a coordinated terrorist attack on the United States.” [*ABC News*, 9/14/2002]

Winfield Stays in Pre-Scheduled Meeting - According to the 9/11 Commission Report, “The job of the NMCC in such an emergency is to gather the relevant parties and establish the chain of command between the National Command Authority—the president and the secretary of defense—and those who need to carry out their orders.” [*9/11 Commission*, 7/24/2004, pp. 37] However, Winfield does not return to his post, and apparently remains in the Air Force-convened meeting. The reason for this is unclear. According to one 9/11 Commission memorandum, “Such meetings” as Winfield is attending “are generally not disturbed unless the reason is significant.” Winfield will only resume his duties as DDO after Flight 93 crashes in Pennsylvania, apparently at around 10:30 a.m. (see [\(10:30 a.m.\) September 11, 2001](#)). [*9/11 Commission*, 4/29/2004 ; *9/11 Commission*, 6/17/2004] Whether Winfield and the other officers with him in the meeting learn that America is under attack immediately, or are only notified of this later on, is unstated.

(Shortly After 9:03 a.m.) September 11, 2001: Pentagon Building Command Center Reacts to WTC Attacks, but Accounts Conflict over Urgency of Its Response

In the Building Operations Command Center (BOCC) inside the Pentagon, Steve Carter and his team are watching the unfolding events in New York on one of the center's monitors. [[Plugged In Quarterly, 3/2002, pp. 4-5](#)] As the assistant building manager, Carter is responsible for the operation and maintenance of the Pentagon. [[CNN, 3/5/2002](#)] The BOCC, which is staffed 24 hours a day, seven days a week, is where systems such as lighting, heating, fire safety, and security for the Pentagon all come together "through a network of thousands of sensors, actuators, and controllers." According to Chuck Holland, a technical manager, it "has three eight-foot screens back-to-back that monitor everything.... Anything that happens inside and outside the building, we watch it." [[IEEE Spectrum, 8/2003; Engineer Update, 6/2007](#)] After seeing the television footage of the second WTC tower being hit, Carter tells his assistant: "That's not an accident. We have an event going." According to some accounts, he and his team immediately begin lockdowns, securing all the mechanical and electrical areas within the Pentagon. They also begin searching for unauthorized people and unusual packages. [[Plugged In Quarterly, 3/2002, pp. 4-5](#)]; [[Hi-Tech Security Solutions, 10/2004; Vogel, 2007, pp. 429](#)] However, a report in the Washington Post suggests their response is less determined. It states that, after the second WTC crash, Carter "grew uneasy and called his boss to suggest they begin locking down electrical and mechanical rooms in the Pentagon in the event that officials upgraded building security." The report does not say whether these actions are implemented before the Pentagon is hit at 9:37 a.m. [[Washington Post, 9/11/2006](#)] Carter also telephones the Pentagon's Defense Protective Service and is informed that the threat condition for the building remains at "Normal" (see [[Shortly After 9:03 a.m. September 11, 2001](#)]). He is told that if it should change, DPS will notify the center. [[Goldberg et al., 2007, pp. 137](#)] No steps are taken to evacuate the Pentagon or alert workers before it is attacked. [[Vogel, 2007, pp. 429](#)]

(9:04 a.m.-9:36 a.m.) September 11, 2001: People in Buildings near Pentagon Concerned They Might be Targets of Attack

People in the vicinity of the Pentagon, including the managers of the high USA Today building, phone the local emergency call center, with concerns about their own safety. [[Creed and Newman, 2008, pp. 48; McClatchy Washington Bureau, 2008](#)] The Emergency Communications Center (ECC) is the focal point of all police and fire 911 calls for Arlington County, where the Pentagon is located. [[Goldberg et al., 2007, pp. 66](#)] After events in New York make it clear the US is under attack, the phones there light up with calls from local people wanting to know what to do. [[Creed and Newman, 2008, pp. 48](#)] According to Assistant Chief James Schwartz of the Arlington County Fire Department, the center is "receiving phone calls from buildings that are along the [Potomac] river and are also along the flight path for [Washington's Reagan] National Airport," which is about a mile from the Pentagon. [[McClatchy Washington Bureau, 2008](#)]

USA Today Building Managers Concerned - Among the callers to the ECC are the building managers at the USA Today building in Rosslyn, who are worried their complex could be a target and want to know if they should evacuate it. [[Creed and Newman, 2008, pp. 48](#)] The USA Today complex is just a few miles down the road from the Pentagon. [[USA Today, 9/13/2001](#)] It includes the two tallest high-rise buildings in the county, one of which is 30-stories high. [[Washington Business Journal, 9/11/2001; Creed and Newman, 2008, pp. 9](#)] These two buildings are in fact known as the "Twin Towers." [[Washington Business Journal, 9/7/2001](#)]

ECC Suggests Evacuation - The ECC has no specific guidance it can offer the building managers, but tells them that if it makes them feel better, based on what they are seeing on television, then they should evacuate their building. [[McClatchy Washington Bureau, 2008](#)] Some employees will begin evacuating from the USA Today building after the Pentagon is hit at 9:37. However, Westfield Realty, the company that owns the building, will not ask the tenants to evacuate until around 11:00 a.m. [[Washington Business Journal, 9/11/2001; Washington Business Journal, 9/14/2001](#)]

Firefighters Think USA Today Building Is a Possible Target - Around the time that the ECC is receiving calls from concerned people in the area, firefighters at a local fire station who have seen the television footage of the attacks in New York start speculating what landmarks terrorists might go for if they attacked northern Virginia. The firefighters in fact see the USA Today complex as the most obvious target, but they also consider the Pentagon, CIA headquarters, the White House, and the Capitol building to be potential targets. [[Creed and Newman, 2008, pp. 9-10](#)] Just before the time of the Pentagon attack, a fire alarm will go off at the USA Today building, though it is unclear whether this is actually caused by a fire there (see [[Shortly Before 9:37 a.m. September 11, 2001](#)]). [[McClatchy Washington Bureau, 2008](#)]

Shortly After 9:03 a.m. September 11, 2001: Despite Attacks in New York, Pentagon Defense Chief Does Not Raise Alert Level

Despite two attacks having occurred in New York, the threat level at the Pentagon is not raised. John Jester, the chief of the Defense Protective Service (DPS)—the law enforcement agency that guards the Pentagon—is in his office at the Pentagon. He had been unaware of the first WTC crash and only learned of it when his press officer, Glenn Flood, phoned about it at around 9:00 a.m. and asked him if he would be reacting. Jester switched on the TV in his office just in time to see the second tower hit, at 9:03 a.m. Even though he realizes that it is "obvious this was a terrible attack," Jester later recalls that at this time, he is "thinking about what else we needed to do based on the attacks in New York, not having in my mind that it would happen here too." [[Murphy, 2002, pp. 243-244](#)] Lieutenant Michael Nesbitt, who runs day-to-day operation in the DPS Communications Center on the first floor of the Pentagon, telephones Jester and asks if he knows about the crashes in New York. Jester instructs Nesbitt to send a message to the building's Real Estate and Facilities Directorate, reassuring everyone that the Pentagon remains secure. Jester tells him that its Terrorist Force Protection Condition is staying at "Normal," which means there is no present threat of terrorist activity. (The Terrorist Force Protection Condition—previously known as the Terrorist Threat Condition—ranges from Normal through four higher levels, from Alpha to Delta.) According to the Defense Department's own book about the Pentagon attack, "No one in DPS received warning of a hijacked aircraft on its way to the Washington area." Jester apparently will not order the threat level to be raised until shortly before

9:37, when the Pentagon is hit (see [\(Shortly Before 9:37 a.m.\) September 11, 2001](#)); at the time of the attack, the alert level will still be at Normal. [[Goldberg et al., 2007, pp. 151-152](#)]

(Shortly After 9:03 a.m.) September 11, 2001: Admiral in Charge of Navy Anti-Terrorism Division Finally Realizes US is Under Attack But Does Not Know From Whom



Jeffrey Hathaway. [*Source: US Department of Defense*] Rear Admiral Jeffrey Hathaway of the US Coast Guard is presently temporarily assigned to the Navy Command Center at the Pentagon. For about the last two months, he has been in charge of Navy Anti-Terrorism Force Protection. He'd been at the Command Center earlier on for the morning briefings, but headed back to Coast Guard headquarters at about 8 a.m. He'd been aware of the first plane hitting the WTC, yet, despite his specific anti-terrorism role, apparently did not know immediately that the US was under terrorist attack. He later says it was only "apparent to me after I found out that the second plane had flown into the World Trade Center that the first one was not an accident, and that there was some sort of a coordinated attack." Furthermore, he will claim, "No one knew where it was coming from. It could have been domestic terrorists for all we knew. No one knew why." He claims there were no indicators that such an attack was imminent, saying, "There were general indicators in the air of general threats; nothing that was in my role that would have indicated hijacked airliners INCONUS [in the continental US].... There was very little attention being paid to anti-terrorism efforts INCONUS for the Navy. We were mostly focused on the fallout from the USS Cole bombing in Yemen." [[US Coast Guard, 6/20/2002](#); [National Defense Magazine, 6/2003](#)]

Shortly After 9:03 a.m. September 11, 2001: Pentagon Defense Chief Says Building Has Nothing to Protect against an Airplane

The head of the agency that provides security at the Pentagon informs another military employee that the Pentagon is unprotected against an aerial attack. In reaction to the news of the attacks on New York, Army Deputy Administrative Assistant Sandra Riley telephones John Jester, the chief of the Defense Protective Service (DPS)—the law enforcement agency that guards the Pentagon. She asks him, "What do we have in place to protect from an airplane?" He tells her, "Nothing." According to the Defense Department's book about the Pentagon attack: "The Pentagon did not have an antiaircraft system on the roof of the building or on the grounds. Even if DPS had received word of an inbound plane, it had no plan to counter a suicide air attack. Had a warning been issued in time, DPS's only effective response would have been evacuation and dispersal of the building's occupants." [[Goldberg et al., 2007, pp. 152](#)] The Washington Post will similarly claim the Pentagon has "no anti-aircraft guns posted on its roof, nor any radars of its own for tracking local air traffic." [[Washington Post, 9/16/2001](#)] Yet, at the nearby White House, the Secret Service is believed to have a battery of ground-to-air Stinger missiles ready to defend the place. [[Daily Telegraph, 9/16/2001](#)]

Shortly After 9:03 a.m. September 11, 2001: Pentagon's Executive Support Center Goes into Operation, But Rumsfeld Not Present



Victoria Clarke. [Source: *US Department of Defense*] Just minutes after the second plane hits the World Trade Center, the Executive Support Center (ESC) within the Pentagon goes into operation. The ESC is located next door to the National Military Command Center (NMCC), and comprises several conference rooms that are secure against electronic eavesdropping. The Pentagon's state-of-the-art communications hub, "Cables," is establishing secure two-way video links with the White House and other key agencies. Assistant Secretary of Defense for Public Affairs Victoria Clarke arrives at the ESC soon after the second crash, accompanied by Larry Di Rita, who is Donald Rumsfeld's personal chief of staff. They have just visited Rumsfeld and informed him of the second crash, but he has remained in his office to wait for his daily intelligence briefing (see [\(Shortly After 9:03 a.m.\) September 11, 2001](#)). Also at the ESC at this time is Rumsfeld's closest aide, Stephen Cambone. According to Clarke, the ESC is "the place where the building's top leadership goes to coordinate military operations during national emergencies." Yet supposedly the Secretary of Defense does not join them there until about 10:15 A.M. (see [\(10:00 a.m.-10:30 a.m.\) September 11, 2001](#)). [Clarke, 2006, pp. 218-221; Cockburn, 2007, pp. 5-6]

[Shortly After 9:03 a.m. September 11, 2001: DIA Supervisor Thinks Pentagon Is Safest Building in the World](#)

In the Defense Intelligence Agency (DIA) comptroller's office, on the first floor of the Pentagon's C-ring, workers are reportedly uneasy at the news of the plane crashes in New York. However, Paul Gonzales, a retired Navy commander who is now a supervisor there, confidently declares that the Pentagon is probably the safest building in the world. So by 9:30 a.m., most of the workers in his section will be settling back to their usual business. The DIA comptroller's office is one of the areas impacted when the Pentagon is hit at 9:37 (see [9:37 a.m. September 11, 2001](#)). Of the 18 workers there, seven will die and five others will be hospitalized. [Washington Post, 3/11/2002; Vogel, 2007, pp. 429; Tennessean, 9/11/2007]

[\(9:20 a.m.-9:42 a.m.\) September 11, 2001: Firefighters Responding to Car Crash at Reagan Airport Quickly Respond to Pentagon Attack](#)

Shortly before the Pentagon is attacked, firefighters with the Metropolitan Washington Airports Authority (MWAA) respond to a multiple vehicle car crash at the upper level of Terminal B of Reagan National Airport, which is less than a mile from the Pentagon. Captain Michael Defina, the acting shift commander, has seen the World Trade Center attacks on television and, although the airport is not on alert, he later claims he has a feeling that Washington could be another terrorist target. Although the shift commander doesn't usually respond to motor vehicle accidents, Defina accompanies the rescue engine and medic unit to the crash at Terminal B because, he says, "something didn't sound right about it." He then hears a "dull roar" when the Pentagon is struck, and turns to see smoke rising above it. [NFPA Journal, 11/1/2001; JEMS, 4/2002] Fire Communications initially tells him that a Boeing 757 crashed off the end of Runway 1-19 at Reagan Airport. This report is soon corrected, and the MWAA is directed to respond to the Pentagon attack. It has substantial resources for this, including two foam units and two mass casualty units. MWAA has authority to automatically respond to plane crashes within 5 miles of Reagan Airport, so two of its heavy rescue units self-dispatch to the Pentagon. Its fire and medical units arrive at the crash site within 5 minutes of the attack. [US Department of Health and Human Services, 7/2002, pp. A6-A7] The Airports Authority firefighters are able to set up directly in front of the impact hole, and their foam units knock down much of the fire within seven minutes of arriving. [NFPA Journal, 11/1/2001]

[\(9:20 a.m.\) September 11, 2001: Fire Chief Warns Firefighters at Pentagon that Washington Could be Target for Attack](#)



Alan Wallace. [Source: Michael Norris] A fire chief calls his firefighters who are manning the fire station at the Pentagon's heliport, and warns them that there could be more attacks, and Washington could be a target. [First Due News, 4/17/2003; Creed and Newman, 2008, pp. 20-21] Chief Charles Campbell works with the fire department at Fort Myer, an army base 1.5 miles northwest of the Pentagon, which sends three of its firefighters each day to man the fire station at the Pentagon heliport. [Pentagram, 11/2/2001] Campbell calls the station to make sure his firefighters there—Alan Wallace, Mark Skipper, and Dennis Young—are aware of what is going on in New York. He tells them, "These were intentional acts of terrorism." He speaks "to each of the three firefighters, making sure they [are] all on their toes and ready to respond to an unexpected incident." Wallace will recall that Campbell "wanted to be sure we were aware of everything going on around the fire station." Campbell says there could be more attacks, and that "If it had happened in New York, it could happen in Washington." As Wallace recalls, Campbell says "Washington, DC could very well be a

target and if that happened, our fire truck could be dispatched to an incident.” [[First Due News, 4/17/2003](#); [Creed and Newman, 2008, pp. 20-21](#)] Yet, while Campbell believes an attack on Washington is likely, neither the Pentagon nor any government buildings in Washington will be evacuated before the Pentagon is hit at 9:37 (see [Before 9:37 a.m. September 11, 2001](#) and [Before 9:37 a.m. September 11, 2001](#)). [[CNN, 9/16/2001](#)] The Fort Myer firefighters will narrowly escape suffering serious injuries when the Pentagon attack occurs (see [9:37 a.m. September 11, 2001](#)). [[Pentagram, 11/2/2001](#)]

(9:29 a.m.-12:00 p.m.) September 11, 2001: Pentagon Command Center Struggles to Connect FAA to Conference Calls

Officers at the National Military Command Center (NMCC) at the Pentagon have serious problems trying to connect the FAA to the conference calls they convene in response to the terrorist attacks. [[US Department of Defense, 9/2001](#); [9/11 Commission, 7/21/2003](#) ; [9/11 Commission, 6/17/2004](#)] The NMCC commences a “significant event conference” at 9:29 a.m., to gather and disseminate information relating to the crisis from government agencies (see [9:29 a.m.-9:34 a.m. September 11, 2001](#)). Minutes later, this is upgraded to an “air threat conference” (see [9:37 a.m.-9:39 a.m. September 11, 2001](#)). According to the 9/11 Commission Report, operators at the NMCC work “feverishly to include the FAA” in the conference, but they have “equipment problems and difficulty finding secure phone numbers.” [[9/11 Commission, 7/21/2003](#) ; [9/11 Commission, 7/24/2004, pp. 37](#)]

NMCC Unable to Connect to FAA - The FAA is not on the NMCC’s established checklist of parties to call for either a significant event conference or an air threat conference. Captain Charles Leidig, the acting deputy director for operations (DDO) in the NMCC during the attacks, therefore has to ask Staff Sergeant Val Harrison to add the FAA to the air threat conference. Harrison tries contacting the operations center at FAA headquarters in Washington, DC, but has difficulty getting through. She finally asks the White House switchboard to help her connect the call to the FAA, but even after a line has been established it is repeatedly lost. [[US Department of Defense, 9/2001](#); [9/11 Commission, 7/21/2003](#)] According to Leidig, the FAA is only “intermittently in,” and “[m]ost of the time they were not in the conference.”

NMCC Establishes Non-Secure Line with FAA - Commander Pat Gardner, the assistant DDO, has to set up an unclassified line with the FAA, because the agency’s only STU-III secure phone is tied up. This unclassified line is separate to the conference call, which is on a special, classified phone circuit. [[9/11 Commission, 4/29/2004](#) ; [9/11 Commission, 6/17/2004](#)] According to Major Charles Chambers, who is currently on duty in the NMCC, because it isn’t in the NMCC’s conference, the FAA “couldn’t go secure and so we couldn’t get first-hand information from them.” [[US Department of Defense, 9/2001](#)]

Connection Problems 'Hampered Information Flow' - Leidig is frustrated at being unable to keep the FAA in the conference. Sometimes questions are asked of the agency, but it is no longer on the line and so the NMCC has to redial it. [[9/11 Commission, 4/29/2004](#)] Leidig will tell the 9/11 Commission that the connection problems, which occur “throughout the morning... hampered information flow to some degree,” because the NMCC is “getting information in a more roundabout way from FAA. Sometimes it would come from a local commander to NORAD back to us, or sometimes it would come on an open line” with the FAA operations center, rather than over the conference. Leidig will add that if the FAA “had been in the same conference that was being directed by the National Military Command Center, the information flow would have went directly to NORAD because [NORAD was] in that conference.” [[9/11 Commission, 6/17/2004](#)]

FAA Employee Joins Conference - According to Harrison, the NMCC is not presently aware of the existence of the FAA Command Center in Herndon, Virginia, and also does not realize that there is a military liaison at the FAA operations center. [[9/11 Commission, 7/21/2003](#)] However, at 10:17 a.m., FAA representative Rayford Brooks, who is at the agency’s Command Center, finally joins the air threat conference (see [10:17 a.m. September 11, 2001](#)), although accounts indicate there are problems keeping him connected after that time. [[9/11 Commission, 4/15/2004](#); [9/11 Commission, 6/17/2004](#); [9/11 Commission, 7/24/2004, pp. 37, 463](#)]

'Compatibility Issues' Supposedly Cause Connection Problems - The FAA keeps getting cut off the NMCC conference because of “technical problems,” according to a 9/11 Commission memorandum. [[9/11 Commission, 7/21/2003](#)] Leidig will tell the Commission it is his understanding that there were some “compatibility issues” between the FAA’s secure phone and the secure phones in the NMCC, and these caused the FAA to keep dropping out of the conference, although he is unaware of the technical aspects of the problem. [[9/11 Commission, 6/17/2004](#)]

9:29 a.m.-9:34 a.m. September 11, 2001: Pentagon Command Center Holds Significant Event Conference Call



The National Military Command Center, inside the Pentagon. [Source: *US Department of Defense*] The National Military Command Center (NMCC) at the Pentagon finally commences and runs a “significant event conference” in response to the ongoing crisis, 26 minutes after the second plane hit the World Trade Center and officers in the NMCC realized the US was under terrorist attack. [9/11 Commission, 6/17/2004 ; 9/11 Commission, 7/24/2004, pp. 37; *American Forces Press Service*, 9/7/2006]

NMCC Directors Decided to Establish Conference - After those in the NMCC saw Flight 175 hitting the WTC live on television at 9:03 a.m. (see [9:03 a.m. September 11, 2001](#)), Captain Charles Leidig, the acting deputy director for operations (DDO) in the center throughout the attacks, and Commander Pat Gardner, the assistant DDO, talked about the need to convene a significant event conference so there could be a discussion of what actions were to be taken in response. The DDO and the assistant DDO are the two officers responsible for deciding what type of conference the NMCC should convene, and when it should do so. Because there is no specific procedure for dealing with terrorist attacks, Leidig and Gardner decided a significant event conference would most suit their needs, because it would have the flexibility of allowing more people to be added in as required. They also discussed who would need to be on this conference. [9/11 Commission, 4/29/2004 ] But Major Charles Chambers, who is currently on duty in the NMCC, will give a slightly different account. According to Chambers, Staff Sergeant Val Harrison had a phone in her hand and said NORAD was asking for a significant event conference. Leidig had agreed, and so Harrison started establishing the conference.

Conference Begins with Recap of Situation - According to Chambers, “The computer does a mass dialing to connect to those command centers that are always included” in an NMCC conference call, but Harrison also had to manually call the civilian agencies that were going to be included in the conference, such as the FAA, the FBI, and the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA). [US Department of Defense, 9/2001] The conference then begins at 9:29 a.m. with a brief recap: Two aircraft have hit the WTC, there is a confirmed hijacking of Flight 11, and fighter jets have been scrambled from Otis Air National Guard Base in Massachusetts (see [8:46 a.m. September 11, 2001](#)). The FAA is asked to provide an update, but its line is silent as the agency has not yet been added to the call (see [\(9:29 a.m.-12:00 p.m.\) September 11, 2001](#)). A minute later, Leidig states that it has just been confirmed that Flight 11 is still airborne and is heading toward Washington, DC. (This incorrect information apparently arose minutes earlier during a conference call between FAA centers (see [9:21 a.m. September 11, 2001](#)).) [9/11 Commission, 7/24/2004, pp. 37] NMCC conference calls are moderated by the DDO. [9/11 Commission, 7/21/2003 ] Leidig will tell the 9/11 Commission that they are conducted over “a special phone circuit, and it’s classified to be able to pass information, relay information between very senior leadership all the way over to the White House.” [9/11 Commission, 6/17/2004]

NMCC Struggled to Convene Conference - Some officers currently on duty in the NMCC will later complain about circumstances that delayed the establishing of the significant event conference. Chambers will recall that the conference took “much longer than expected to bring up.” [US Department of Defense, 9/2001] Gardner will tell the 9/11 Commission that the NMCC had been “struggling to build the conference,” which “didn’t get off as quickly as hoped.” [9/11 Commission, 5/5/2004] He will describe his “frustration that it wasn’t brought up more quickly.” [9/11 Commission, 5/12/2004]

Other Conference and Connection Problems Delayed Call - Preparations for the conference were disrupted as a result of the CIA convening a National Operations and Intelligence Watch Officer Network (NOIWON) conference call between government agencies in the Washington area, reportedly at sometime between 9:16 a.m. and 9:25 a.m. (see [\(Between 9:16 a.m. and 9:25 a.m.\) September 11, 2001](#)). According to a 9/11 Commission memorandum, the NMCC had “abandoned its attempt to convene a [significant event conference] so its watch officers could participate in the NOIWON conference.” [Federal Aviation Administration, 9/11/2001; Federal Aviation Administration, 9/11/2001; 9/11 Commission, 7/21/2003 ] Another factor that slowed attempts to convene the significant event conference was a problem with connecting some agencies to it. According to Chambers, “A couple of the civil agencies couldn’t be reached and others kept dropping off moments after connecting.” He will recall, “We finally decided to proceed without those agencies that were having phone problems.” [US Department of Defense, 9/2001] Leidig had announced that the NMCC would have to start without those agencies and add them to the conference later on. [9/11 Commission, 5/12/2004]

Call Ends after Five Minutes - The significant event conference ends after only a few minutes, following a recommendation by NORAD that it be reconvened as an “air threat conference.” It is brought to an end at around 9:34 a.m., and will resume as an air threat conference at 9:37 a.m. (see [9:37 a.m.-9:39 a.m. September 11, 2001](#)). [9/11 Commission, 4/29/2004 ; 9/11 Commission, 7/24/2004, pp. 37]

[\(9:35 a.m.-9:36 a.m.\) September 11, 2001: Several Witnesses See Helicopter near the Pentagon](#)

A number of witnesses see a helicopter flying near the Pentagon in the minutes before the attack there.

■ Jeffrey Mark Parsons, an assistant chief patrol agent with the United States Border Patrol, sees a blue and white helicopter that appears as if it is coming in to land, from a window on the 17th floor of the hotel he is staying at, near the Pentagon. Parsons will later recall that two or three minutes before the Pentagon attack occurs: “I saw [the helicopter] circle... between the hotel and the Pentagon, going toward the landing pad [at the Pentagon] where that airliner ultimately hit. And I thought that he landed on the pad.” Parsons will say the helicopter flies in at “a weird angle,” and recall that he has been staying at the Marriott Residence Inn in Arlington for almost a month, but has “never seen a helicopter approach the Pentagon from that direction before.” He will recognize the helicopter as a Huey because he has flown Hueys and knows they make “a very distinct sound.” According to John Darrell Sherwood, a Navy historian who interviews Parsons about the incident, the helicopter belongs to the US Park Police and has been instructed to intercept the aircraft that subsequently hits the Pentagon (see [Shortly Before 9:35 a.m. September 11, 2001](#)). [US Naval Historical Center, 12/13/2001; Goldberg et al., 2007, pp. 258]

■ A senior Air Force officer who is somewhere outside the Pentagon also sees a helicopter circling the Pentagon around this time, although he believes it to be a US military helicopter. Shortly after the Pentagon attack, the unnamed officer will tell a CNN reporter that the helicopter “disappeared behind the building where the helicopter landing zone is... and he then saw [a] fireball go into the

sky” when the Pentagon is hit. [[CNN, 9/11/2001](#)]

■Jennifer Reichert, who is stuck in traffic on Route 27 in front of the Pentagon, will later describe that just before the attack, “A helicopter takes off from the heliport at the Pentagon.” She will add: “Minutes—maybe seconds—later, I hear it: American Airlines Flight 77 screams toward the Pentagon. The explosion [of the crash] shakes my car.” [[Washington Post, 9/5/2002](#)]

Perhaps due to the presence of this helicopter in the area, some people will initially think the attack on the Pentagon involves a helicopter hitting the building. Captain William Durm, the commander of the Pentagon’s Triservice Dental Clinic, will head to the building’s center courtyard shortly after the Pentagon is hit. Someone there will tell him a helicopter has hit the other side of the building. [[Office of Medical History, 9/2004, pp. 11](#)] Some early news reports will suggest a helicopter crashed into the Pentagon. [[Poynter Institute, 9/11/2001](#); [Thomas Crosbie Media, 9/11/2001](#)] One report will claim that “one aircraft and a helicopter have crashed into the Pentagon.” [[Airline Industry Information, 9/11/2001](#)] Vice President Dick Cheney will later tell NBC’s *Meet the Press* that “the first reports on the Pentagon attack suggested a helicopter” hit the building. [[Meet the Press, 9/16/2001](#)] The Guardian will report that one witness claims the explosion that occurs when the Pentagon is hit blows up a helicopter circling overhead. [[Guardian, 9/12/2001](#)] New York Times columnist William Safire will report that, at approximately this time, Cheney is told that either another plane or “a helicopter loaded with explosives” is heading for the White House. [[New York Times, 9/13/2001](#)]

(9:35 a.m.) September 11, 2001: Contractors Evacuate Pentagon Just before It Is Hit

A contract crew has been installing furniture in the southwest perimeter of the Pentagon. Construction workers are currently doing the final touching up, after more than three years of renovation work on this area of the building, and some Defense Department employees are already moving into their new office spaces. But the wife of one crew member phones her husband after seeing footage of the attacks in New York on CNN and says she feels he is in danger at the Pentagon. Hearing of the attacks, the crew leader instructs his 23 workers to abandon what they are doing and evacuate. Moments later, as they are crossing the parking lot, they see the airliner crash into the exact area of the Pentagon they had just left. [[Government Executive, 5/1/2002](#); [Freni, 2003, pp. 43-44](#)] There is no evidence that anyone else in the Pentagon evacuates the building before it is struck (see [Before 9:37 a.m. September 11, 2001](#)). [[Newsday, 9/23/2001](#)] Another report, which appears to be describing the same incident, says the construction crew evacuates for a different reason: to discuss security with a customer in the parking lot. [[Pentagram, 9/14/2001](#)]

(Shortly Before 9:37 a.m.) September 11, 2001: E-mail Informs Pentagon Staff that Alert Level Is Still ‘Normal’



Peter Murphy. [[Source: Gerry J. Gilmore](#)] Peter Murphy, the counsel to the commandant of the Marine Corps, is in his office on the fourth floor of the Pentagon’s outer E Ring, watching the CNN coverage of the attacks in New York. Having seen what happened, Murphy had asked Robert Hogue, his deputy counsel, to check with their administrative clerk, Corporal Timothy Garofola, on the current security status of the Pentagon. Yet despite what has happened in New York, Garofola has reportedly “just received an e-mail from the security manager to all Department of Defense employees that the threat condition remained ‘Normal.’” Garofola passes this information to Hogue. As Hogue is stepping into Murphy’s office to relay the message to him, there is a tremendous explosion as the Pentagon is hit. [[Leatherneck, 11/2001](#); [Washington Times, 9/11/2002](#); [Washington Post, 8/3/2003](#)] Reportedly, John Pugrud—the deputy chief of the Defense Protective Service, which guards the Pentagon—is finally about to pass on an instruction to raise the threat level at this time, when the Pentagon is hit (see [9:37 a.m. September 11, 2001](#)). [[Goldberg et al., 2007, pp. 152](#)] The aircraft crashes two floors below and just yards to the right of Murphy’s office. Fortunately, neither he nor any of the men with him are hurt, and they all manage to make it safely outside. [[American Forces Press Service, 8/16/2002](#)]

Before 9:37 a.m. September 11, 2001: Pentagon Not Evacuated Prior to Being Hit

Before the Pentagon is hit, no steps are taken to alert or evacuate the building’s 20,000 employees. Even Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld and his top aides are reportedly unaware of a rogue plane heading toward Washington prior to the attack there. [[ABC News, 9/16/2001](#); [Newsday, 9/23/2001](#); [Vogel, 2007, pp. 429](#)] Pentagon spokesman Glenn Flood will later try to explain why the Pentagon is not evacuated at this time, saying: “To call for a general evacuation, at that point, it would have been just guessing. We evacuate when we know something is a real threat to us.” He says that an evacuation could have put employees at risk by moving them outside the

protection provided by the building's walls. Another Pentagon spokesman, Air Force Lt. Col. Vic Warzinski, will add, "The Pentagon was simply not aware that this aircraft was coming our way." [[Newsday, 9/23/2001](#)] Yet, as early as 9:21, the FAA warned the military of a hijacked aircraft heading toward Washington (see [9:21 a.m. September 11, 2001](#) and [\(9:24 a.m.\) September 11, 2001](#)). The National Military Command Center (NMCC), located inside the Pentagon, was aware of this hijacked aircraft by 9:30, according to the 9/11 Commission (see [9:29 a.m.-9:34 a.m. September 11, 2001](#)). [[9/11 Commission, 7/24/2004, pp. 26 and 37](#); [Vogel, 2007, pp. 429](#)] The New York Times will in fact report that, since shortly before 9:00 a.m., "military officials in [the NMCC] were urgently talking to law enforcement and air traffic control officials about what to do." [[New York Times, 9/15/2001](#)] The order to evacuate will only go out over the Pentagon's public address system shortly after the building is hit. [[Goldberg et al., 2007, pp. 137-138](#)] The Defense Protective Service, which guards the Pentagon, does not order that the building's threat level be raised until the time when it is hit (see [9:37 a.m. September 11, 2001](#)). [[Goldberg et al., 2007, pp. 151-152](#)]

[Shortly Before 9:37 a.m. September 11, 2001: Navy Intelligence Unit at Pentagon Learns of Third Hijacked Plane Approaching Washington](#)



Dan Shanower. [*Source: Family photo / Associated Press*] Petty Officer Jason Lhuillier is on duty at the Chief of Naval Operations Intelligence Plot (CNO-IP). This small intelligence unit is located within the Navy Command Center at the Pentagon, on the first floor of the building's southwest face. Since learning of the second plane hitting the WTC, he and his colleagues have been trying to build the intelligence picture, liaising with such agencies as the CIA and the Defense Intelligence Agency. Shortly before the Pentagon is struck, Lhuillier receives a phone call from the National Military Joint Intelligence Center (NMJIC). [[Washington Post, 9/16/2001](#); [Washington Post, 1/20/2002](#); [Daily Telegraph, 9/11/2002](#)] Like the National Military Command Center (NMCC), the NMJIC is located in the Joint Staff area of the Pentagon. It constantly monitors worldwide developments for any looming crises that might require US involvement. [[Washington Times, 9/25/1997](#); [Joint Chiefs of Staff, 2/6/2006](#)] The caller informs Lhuillier, "We've got indications of another aircraft that's been hijacked. It's heading out to DC." [[Daily Telegraph, 9/11/2002](#)] The caller may possibly be referring to the same incorrect report that was received by the NMCC at around 9:30 a.m., that Flight 11 is still airborne and heading toward Washington (see [9:29 a.m.-9:34 a.m. September 11, 2001](#)). [[9/11 Commission, 7/24/2004, pp. 37](#)] Lhuillier then interrupts a meeting between Commander Dan Shanower, who is in charge of the CNO-IP, and six others, to tell them about this third plane. Commander David Radi, an aide to Admiral William Fallon, the vice chief of naval operations, is in his Pentagon office about 100 yards from the CNO-IP. He has also heard fragmentary reports about another hijacked plane heading towards Washington, and that fighter jets are being scrambled. He calls the CNO-IP for more information, but is only told, "We're working on it." Radi later recalls that he'd wondered where the plane might be heading: "I'm thinking to myself, 'Well, the Pentagon, the White House or the Capitol.'" Within minutes, the Pentagon is struck. The CNO-IP will be destroyed in the impact, and seven people working in it will be killed. [[Washington Post, 1/20/2002](#); [Arlington County Police Department, 2/21/2002](#); [Daily Telegraph, 9/11/2002](#)]

[\(Shortly Before 9:37 a.m.\) September 11, 2001: Sheer Coincidence Brings Emergency Rescue near to Pentagon; Bomb Disposal Unit Also on Its Way before Attack](#)

In response to an emergency 911 telephone call, the Arlington County Emergency Communications Center dispatches several units to deal with an apartment fire at 1003 Wilson Boulevard in Rosslyn, Virginia—within the vicinity of the Pentagon. Because this fire is in a high-rise building, nine different fire and medical service units are dispatched. However, the first engine crew to arrive radios to the other units that the fire has gone out. Consequently, by "sheer coincidence," at the time when the Pentagon is hit, there are a significant number of available fire and medical service units already on the road nearby. [[US Department of Health and Human Services, 7/2002, pp. A9](#); [Fire Engineering, 11/2002](#)] Assistant Chief James Schwartz of the Arlington County Fire Department will later recall that, around this time, firefighters are dispatched in response to an alarm at the high-rise USA Today complex in Rosslyn (see [\(Shortly Before 9:37 a.m.\) September 11, 2001](#)). The address of the complex is 1000 and 1110 Wilson Boulevard, suggesting this is in fact the same incident as the "apartment fire" at 1003 Wilson Boulevard. [[Washington Business Journal, 9/7/2001](#); [McClatchy Washington Bureau, 2008](#)] Furthermore, apparently around this same time, soldiers from a bomb ordnance disposal unit at Fort Belvoir, 12 miles south of the Pentagon, are on their way to do a sweep of the Pentagon heliport, ready for the expected arrival of the president there at around midday (see [8:30 a.m. September 11, 2001](#)). [[Goldberg et al., 2007, pp. 64-65](#)]

[Shortly Before 9:37 a.m. September 11, 2001: Army Airfield near Pentagon Ordered to Recall Its Aircraft](#)

The air traffic control tower at an Army airfield near the Pentagon receives a call from someone at Washington's Reagan National Airport—presumably an air traffic controller—who instructs it to recall all its aircraft. [[US Army Center for Military History, 11/14/2001](#) ] Davison Army Airfield is at Fort Belvoir, 12 miles south of the Pentagon. The 12th Aviation Battalion, which is the Military District of Washington's aviation support unit, is stationed there. This includes three helicopter companies that fly UH-1 "Huey" and UH-60 Black Hawk helicopters. [[Military District of Washington, 8/2000](#)]

Airfield Told to Land All Aircraft 'Very Quickly' - According to a supervisor of air traffic control at Davison Airfield who is currently in the airfield's control tower, shortly before the time when the Pentagon is hit a controller at his facility receives the call from Reagan Airport telling them to recall all their air traffic. The supervisor, who will say that the caller is "going crazy," takes over the call. The caller then tells him to "recall all your traffic. Just make sure that everybody lands.... [H]e was like, telling us, everybody that you got outside, bring them in and land them quickly, very quickly." The supervisor tells him, "Give me a reason and I'll do it," but the caller responds, "I can't tell you the reason, but you need to do this." [[US Army Center for Military History, 11/14/2001](#) ] (At around 9:32 a.m., according to the 9/11 Commission, Washington's Dulles Airport notified Reagan Airport of a "radar target tracking eastbound at a high rate of speed" toward Washington (see [9:32 a.m. September 11, 2001](#)), so it is plausible that this is what has prompted Reagan Airport to call the Davison control tower. [[9/11 Commission, 8/26/2004, pp. 33](#) ])

Davison Airfield Recalls Its Aircraft - After the caller hangs up, the supervisor at Davison Airfield instructs the air traffic controller at his facility to "tell everybody to come in." The controller then starts "recalling everybody that just departed," and the supervisor approves "for them to make it straight in, the helicopters to land straight in without using the regular traffic pattern." The control tower recalls its aircraft individually, rather than putting out a single broadcast telling all aircraft to return to the airfield. The supervisor will recall: "[E]verybody was coming in. And at that time when everybody was coming in... I was like thinking, why? Why do they want to recall everybody? That means that something is going on." While the control tower is still recalling its aircraft, the supervisor looks out of a window to the northeast, and notices a large black cloud of smoke in the area of the Pentagon, the result of the attack there. [[US Army Center for Military History, 11/14/2001](#) ] It is unclear what aircraft from Davison Airfield are airborne and recalled to base. But a 12th Aviation Battalion helicopter and its crew that are always on standby for "contingency" missions have been away this morning, conducting a traffic survey (see [Early Morning September 11, 2001](#)). They are presumably recalled at this time, if not beforehand. [[Army Center of Military History, 11/14/2001](#) ]

[\(Shortly Before 9:37 a.m.\) September 11, 2001: Fire Department Responds to Alarm from USA Today 'Twin Towers' Building, near Pentagon](#)



The 'Twin Towers' USA Today building in Rosslyn, Virginia. [*Source: Monday Properties*] Arlington County firefighters are dispatched in response to a fire alarm at the USA Today building, located just a few miles down the road from the Pentagon, though whether there is actually a fire there is unclear. [[USA Today, 9/13/2001](#); [McClatchy Washington Bureau, 2008](#)] The USA Today complex, in the Rosslyn area, includes the two tallest high-rise buildings in the county, which are in fact known as the "Twin Towers." [[Washington Business Journal, 9/7/2001](#); [Creed and Newman, 2008, pp. 9](#)] The building's managers had been worried that the complex could be a terrorist target, and called the Arlington County Emergency Communications Center (ECC), asking if they should evacuate (see [\(9:04 a.m.-9:36 a.m.\) September 11, 2001](#)). According to Assistant Chief James Schwartz of the Arlington County Fire Department, "Shortly after that, we had a fire response for alarm bells at the USA Today building." Schwartz is dispatched to the building, but before he leaves his office, word is received about the Pentagon attack, so he heads to the Pentagon instead. [[McClatchy Washington Bureau, 2008](#); [Creed and Newman, 2008, pp. 48-49](#)]

Fire Chief Believes Alarm Activated to Facilitate Evacuation - Schwartz will later reflect, "I've always suspected that people who were evacuating [the USA Today building] decided that they would pull the fire alarm in order to get everybody out of the building,

and that initiated a response on our part.” [[McClatchy Washington Bureau, 2008](#)] However, according to USA Today spokesman Steve Anderson, who is at the complex, employees of USA Today and its parent company Gannett only begin evacuating the building after the Pentagon attack occurs. Westfield Realty, the company that owns the building, asks all the tenants to evacuate at about 11:00 a.m., but most will already have left by then. [[Washington Business Journal, 9/11/2001](#); [Washington Business Journal, 9/14/2001](#)] Report Apparently Describes Same Incident - The alarm at the USA Today building may be the same incident as is later described in the Arlington County After-Action Report on the emergency response to the Pentagon attack. The report states that, “just one minute before the Pentagon crash,” several fire and medical units are dispatched “to an apartment fire at 1003 Wilson Boulevard in Rosslyn” (see [\[Shortly Before 9:37 a.m.\] September 11, 2001](#)). [[US Department of Health and Human Services, 7/2002, pp. A9](#)] The address of the USA Today complex is reported as being “1000 and 1110 Wilson Blvd.,” suggesting this is the same building as where the “apartment fire” is reported to be. [[Washington Business Journal, 9/7/2001](#)] The first engine to arrive in response to the apartment fire reports that it is already out. [[US Department of Health and Human Services, 7/2002, pp. A9](#)] News Reports of Fire - In the aftermath of the attack on the Pentagon, news reports will—apparently incorrectly—describe a fire at the USA Today building. At 9:46 a.m., local radio station WTOP will report, “We’re hearing from a caller who says she is eyewitness to another hit here in town; the USA Today building may also be on fire in addition to the Pentagon.” [[Broadcasting and Cable, 8/26/2002](#)] The Washington Post will describe, “The USA Today building in Rosslyn was supposedly enveloped in smoke.” [[Washington Post, 9/11/2001](#)] But the Associated Press states that “Radio reports about an explosion at the USA Today building in Rosslyn were false.” [[Associated Press, 9/11/2001](#)]

[\(9:36 a.m.\) September 11, 2001: Senior Navy Officer Wants Report of Hijacked Plane Approaching Washington Kept Secret](#)



William Douglas Crowder. [[Source: US Navy](#)] A senior Navy officer at the Pentagon is told in a phone call that another hijacked aircraft is heading toward Washington, DC, and yet he tells a colleague who also receives this news to keep the information to himself. [[US Naval Historical Center, 10/10/2001](#)] Rear Admiral William Douglas Crowder is the executive assistant to Admiral William Fallon, the vice chief of naval operations. [[US Department of Defense, 9/26/2001](#); [Proceedings, 9/2002](#)] He is working in Fallon’s office, on the fourth floor of the Pentagon’s E-ring. [[US Naval Historical Center, 10/10/2001](#); [Washington Post, 11/17/2006](#)] Fallon is currently down the hall, in the office of Admiral Vern Clark, the chief of naval operations. Those in Fallon’s office are aware of the attacks on the World Trade Center, and have speculated that if this is an organized attack, then Washington, and specifically the Pentagon, is a likely target (see [\[8:48 a.m.-9:03 a.m.\] September 11, 2001](#)).

Crowder Told of Plane Approaching Washington - Crowder now answers a call from the Navy Command Center, which is on the first floor of the Pentagon’s southwest face. His deputy, Commander David Radi, listens in on the call, as he is required to. Captain William Toti, the special assistant to the vice chief of naval operations, will later describe what Crowder is told. Toti will recall, “I was not listening in, but the gist of the conversation was there’s another airplane that’s been hijacked that’s heading towards Washington.” [[US Naval Historical Center, 10/10/2001](#)] (An intelligence unit located within the Navy Command Center was recently notified of “indications of another aircraft that’s been hijacked” and that is “heading out to DC” (see [\[Shortly Before 9:37 a.m.\] September 11, 2001](#)). [[Daily Telegraph, 9/11/2002](#)]) Crowder replies to the caller, “Okay, got it.”

Crowder Instructs Deputy to Keep Information Secret - Radi appears afraid. Presumably referring to the office staff’s prediction of a possible attack on the Pentagon, he says: “Holy sh_t. Captain Toti, it’s coming true.” Crowder runs out of the office to go and tell Fallon what he has just learned. But as he is heading out, he calls back to Radi: “That’s close hold. Don’t tell anybody what you just heard.” Toti will comment, “Remember that Crowder and Radi are the only two people who heard” about the approaching hijacked plane. Just then, the Pentagon is hit: “Not 30 seconds after Crowder hangs up and runs out the door,” Toti will recall, “we hear the airplane, the jet engines, and feel impact. The building shook like an earthquake. We heard the explosion.” [[US Naval Historical Center, 10/10/2001](#)] No steps have been taken to evacuate the Pentagon or alert its workers before the building is hit (see [\[Before 9:37 a.m.\] September 11, 2001](#)). [[Vogel, 2007, pp. 429](#)]

Officer Finds Crowder's Order 'Peculiar' - In an interview a month later, Toti will reflect: “In retrospect, I wonder what the hell was close hold about that fact that there was a hijacked airplane coming in towards the Pentagon. If anything, it would have been nice to alert people of that.” He will add that he has not asked Crowder “why he said that,” but says Crowder’s instruction to Radi “stuck out

in [my] mind at the time as kind of a peculiar thing to say.”

Officer Told Not to Go to Command Center - Toti's life is likely saved because, just before the call about the approaching plane is received, Crowder told him not to go to the Navy Command Center—a part of the Pentagon that suffers serious damage when the building is hit. After seeing the burning WTC on television, Toti had been uncomfortable that his office had not received any information about what was going on from the Command Center. After “a few minutes of hearing nothing,” he had suggested to Crowder “that I go to the ops center to see if they had any information we should pass to senior Navy leadership.” But, as Toti was heading out the door toward the Command Center, Crowder instructed him: “Wait, give them another minute. If they don't call by then, you can go down.” Toti therefore returned to his desk. “Just then,” Toti will recall, Crowder receives the call from the Command Center about the hijacked plane approaching Washington. [[US Naval Historical Center, 10/10/2001](#); [Proceedings, 9/2002](#)] Much of the Navy Command Center is destroyed when the Pentagon is hit (see [9:37 a.m. September 11, 2001](#)), and 42 of the 50 people working in it are killed. [[Washington Post, 1/20/2002](#); [National Defense Magazine, 6/2003](#)] Toti will say that Crowder “probably saved my life.” [[US Naval Historical Center, 10/10/2001](#)]

[\(9:36 a.m.\) September 11, 2001: American Airlines Plane Seen Taking Off from Reagan Airport, Flying toward Pentagon](#)



The Marriott Residence Inn in Arlington, Virginia. [*Source: Marriott International*] An American Airlines plane takes off from Ronald Reagan Washington National Airport, flying toward the Pentagon, just before the Pentagon attack occurs, according to a witness who says he sees the plane out the window of his hotel room.

Plane Takes Off toward Pentagon - Jeffrey Mark Parsons, an assistant chief patrol agent with the United States Border Patrol, is staying on the 17th floor of the Marriott Residence Inn in Arlington, Virginia. When later interviewed by Navy historian John Darrell Sherwood about his experiences of the 9/11 attacks, Parsons will recall: “I was looking out my window. I have a perfect view of Reagan National Airport. An American Airlines plane had just taken off, I mean, not 30 seconds before this plane [Flight 77] hit the Pentagon.” Parsons will add that the American Airlines plane is “taking off to the north, to the, different than the normal way. In other words, they were taking off toward the Pentagon.” [[US Naval Historical Center, 12/13/2001](#); [Goldberg et al., 2007, pp. 258](#)] Reagan National Airport is less than a mile from the Pentagon. [[St. Petersburg Times, 10/3/2001](#)] Parsons will continue, “Well, this American Airlines plane had just taken off, I mean it couldn't have been a minute, 30 seconds before this plane [Flight 77] hit the Pentagon.” [[US Naval Historical Center, 12/13/2001](#)] Flight 77 hits the Pentagon at 9:37 a.m. (see [9:37 a.m. September 11, 2001](#)) and, like the plane Parsons sees, is an American Airlines aircraft. [[9/11 Commission, 7/24/2004, pp. 10](#)]

American Airlines and Reagan Airport Planes Supposedly Grounded - And yet Chris Stephenson, the supervisor in the Reagan National Airport control tower, reportedly stopped takeoffs from Reagan Airport in the minutes after 9:03 a.m., when Flight 175 hit the World Trade Center (see [\(9:04 a.m.-9:11 a.m.\) September 11, 2001](#)). [[USA Today, 8/11/2002](#)] And at 9:00 a.m., American Airlines ordered all its aircraft in the Northeast United States that had not yet taken off to remain on the ground (see [Between 9:00 a.m. and 9:10 a.m. September 11, 2001](#)). [[9/11 Commission, 8/26/2004, pp. 30](#)] Furthermore, the FAA ordered a nationwide ground stop at around 9:26 a.m., which was supposed to prevent any aircraft taking off across the US (see [\(9:26 a.m.\) September 11, 2001](#)). [[US Congress, House, Committee On Transportation And Infrastructure, 9/21/2001](#); [9/11 Commission, 7/24/2004, pp. 25](#)] Parsons will ask Sherwood if anyone has interviewed the pilot of the American Airlines plane he saw taking off, since that pilot must have witnessed the attack on the Pentagon. Sherwood will answer no, but add, “[T]hat's another good lead for either myself or one of the other people to follow up on.” Whether the pilot is ever identified or interviewed is unknown. [[US Naval Historical Center, 12/13/2001](#)]

[\(Shortly Before 9:37 a.m.\) September 11, 2001: Chief of Pentagon Defense Protective Service Instructs Deputy to Raise Alert Level](#)



John Jester. [Source: *The Pentagon Channel*] John Jester, the chief of the Defense Protective Service (DPS), which guards the Pentagon, finally gives the instruction to raise the Pentagon's state of alert, though only by one level. Jester had been in his office on the fourth floor of the Pentagon when he learned of the attacks in New York (see [Shortly After 9:03 a.m. September 11, 2001](#)). He had reviewed contingency plans and procedures for increasing security with DPS Major James Phillips, and then headed to the office of David O. "Doc" Cooke, the head of the Washington Headquarters Services. Jester next goes to the office of his immediate supervisor Paul Haselbush, the director of real estate and facilities. [Goldberg et al., 2007, pp. 151-152] Jester will recall that Haselbush asks him: "What if a plane were to come here? It's just a thought that people have had. What if it were to occur here?" Jester replies: "Hopefully it is not going to happen here. What can you do to defend a building against a plane?" [Murphy, 2002, pp. 244] According to the Defense Department's own book about the Pentagon attack, before returning to his office Jester meets with his deputy, John Pugrud, and directs him to notify the DPS Communications Center to raise the Terrorist Force Protection Condition. This ranges from Normal up through four higher levels, Alpha to Delta. But Jester only instructs that it be raised one level, from Normal to Alpha, which means a general threat of possible terrorist activity exists that requires enhanced security. [Goldberg et al., 2007, pp. 152] It requires spot-inspections of vehicles and increased police patrols. [Washington Post, 9/16/2001] In one account, Jester will recall having instructed Pugrud to increase the threat level earlier, before he'd headed to Cooke's office. [Murphy, 2002, pp. 244] But other evidence is consistent with him giving this instruction at the later time, minutes before the Pentagon attack. For example, Marine Corporal Timothy Garofola reportedly receives an e-mail shortly before the Pentagon is struck, informing all Defense Department employees that the threat condition remains at Normal (see [Shortly Before 9:37 a.m. September 11, 2001](#)). [Leatherneck, 11/2001] And Pugrud is reportedly trying to phone the DPS Communications Center about raising the threat level at the very time the Pentagon is hit (see [9:37 a.m. September 11, 2001](#)). [Goldberg et al., 2007, pp. 152]

Before 9:37 a.m. September 11, 2001: Government Departments in Washington Not Evacuated Prior to Pentagon Attack

Government buildings in Washington, DC, are not evacuated prior to the attack on the Pentagon at 9:37 a.m. As CNN will describe, even after the attacks on the World Trade Center and the FAA's warning to the military of a hijacked aircraft apparently heading toward Washington (see [9:21 a.m. September 11, 2001](#) and [\(9:24 a.m.\) September 11, 2001](#)), "the federal government failed to make any move to evacuate the White House, Capitol, State Department, or the Pentagon." [CNN, 9/16/2001] Although a slow evacuation of the White House begins around 9:20 a.m. (see [\(9:20 a.m.\) September 11, 2001](#)), it is not until 9:45 that the Secret Service orders people to run from there (see [\(9:45 a.m.\) September 11, 2001](#)). [CNN, 9/11/2001; CNN, 9/12/2001; ABC News, 9/11/2002] Other government buildings, including the Capitol (see [9:48 a.m. September 11, 2001](#)), the Justice Department, the State Department, and the Supreme Court, will not be evacuated until between 9:45 and 10:45 a.m. [US News and World Report, 9/14/2001; US Department of State, 8/15/2002] Robert Bonner, who was recently nominated as Commissioner of Customs, will later estimate that he was evacuated from the Treasury Department at "about 9:35 a.m." [9/11 Commission, 1/26/2004; US Department of Homeland Security, 9/20/2004] But other accounts say the Treasury Department is not evacuated until after the Pentagon attack. [Associated Press, 9/11/2001; Reuters, 9/11/2001; US Department of State, 9/11/2002] Furthermore, journalist and author Robert Draper will describe that, even after the State and Treasury departments have been evacuated: "no agents thought to take charge of the Commerce Department, which housed 5,000 employees. Eventually, Secretary [of Commerce] Don Evans got tired of waiting for orders and had someone drive him to his home in McLean, where he sat for hours until he finally made contact with the Secret Service." [Draper, 2007, pp. 143] According to CNN, prior to the Pentagon attack, "neither the FAA, NORAD, nor any other federal government organ made any effort to evacuate the buildings in Washington. Officials at the Pentagon said that no mechanism existed within the US government to notify various departments and agencies under such circumstances [as occur on 9/11]." [CNN, 9/16/2001]

Shortly Before 9:37 a.m. September 11, 2001: Pentagon Heliport Tower Controllers Concerned about Plane Hitting Pentagon



Jacqueline Kidd and Sean Boger. [Source: Jennifer Lilly] The air traffic controller and his assistant in the control tower at the Pentagon's heliport are concerned that they are in a prime location for another terrorist attack, and discuss the possibility of a plane crashing into the Pentagon. [[Pentagram, 11/16/2001](#); [Fort Belvoir News, 1/18/2002](#); [Creed and Newman, 2008, pp. 21](#)] The controller, Sean Boger, a civilian who is working for the Army, and his assistant, Army Specialist Jacqueline Kidd, are working in the control tower located between the Pentagon and its heliport, from where they direct helicopter landings and departures. [[Goldberg et al., 2007, pp. 27](#); [Creed and Newman, 2008, pp. 21](#)] They have seen the reports on television about the planes hitting the World Trade Center, and so realize that a terrorist attack is taking place. [[Pentagram, 11/16/2001](#); [Fort Belvoir News, 1/18/2002](#)]

Controllers Discuss Possibility of Crash at Pentagon - Kidd will later recall that, after seeing the second crash on television, she and Boger begin "discussing the possibility of if it was a terrorist attack, and how we were at a prime spot to be hit. We started talking about that immediately." She will add that Boger mentions to her that the flight path of Reagan National Airport, which is about a mile away, "comes right by the Pentagon, and I said, 'Oh, yeah.' And he said, 'They can do the same thing to us.'" However, Kidd and Boger reportedly talk "casually" about the possibility of a plane hitting the Pentagon, "without seriously feeling threatened." [[Fort Belvoir News, 1/18/2002](#)] According to other accounts, Boger wonders aloud why no airliner has ever hit the Pentagon, considering how close it is to Reagan Airport. [[Goldberg et al., 2007, pp. 27](#)] Kidd tells him, "You've been saying that for three years," and he responds, "Yeah, you're right." [[Creed and Newman, 2008, pp. 21](#)] Reportedly, Boger is "talking about an accident, not a terrorist attack." [[Pentagram, 11/16/2001](#)]

Controller Discusses Concerns with Supervisor at Airfield - Boger also calls the control tower at Davison Army Airfield, which is about 12 miles south of the Pentagon, around this time, and discusses his concerns with the supervisor of air traffic control there. Boger works for the supervisor's unit and has already called the supervisor to alert him to the attacks in New York. Boger now tells the supervisor how worried he is "that an aircraft can just easily do that," presumably referring to the possibility of a plane crashing into the Pentagon. He also says, "I don't know what I'm going to do if I see a plane coming like that towards—towards us." The supervisor will later comment, "I always was aware of that, of how close some aircraft would fly over the facility... and how easy it would be for somebody to kind of storm the small tower." The supervisor tells Boger that if he sees an airplane heading his way, "what you do is you grab [Kidd] and get out of the building, and just go towards Route 27," the road in front of the heliport area. [[US Army Center for Military History, 11/14/2001](#)] However, while personnel like Boger, Kidd, and the supervisor of air traffic control are considering the possibility of a plane hitting the Pentagon at this time, no steps are taken to alert workers at the Pentagon before it is struck (see [Before 9:37 a.m. September 11, 2001](#)), and an order to evacuate the building will only go out over the Pentagon's public address system shortly after the attack there. [[Goldberg et al., 2007, pp. 137-138](#); [Vogel, 2007, pp. 429](#)]

Pentagon Hit Close to Tower - Boger and Kidd will both suffer minor injuries when the Pentagon is hit less than 100 feet from where they are, and the heliport tower will be badly damaged by the explosion. [[US Army Center for Military History, 11/14/2001](#)]; [Fort Belvoir News, 1/18/2002](#)] Kidd will be on the tower's ground floor, on her way outside to her car, when the crash occurs. [[Pentagram, 11/16/2001](#); [Fort Belvoir News, 1/18/2002](#)] Boger will still be up in the tower, and, he will say, sees Flight 77 flying low and fast toward—and then into—the Pentagon. [[US Army Center for Military History, 11/14/2001](#)]; [Goldberg et al., 2007, pp. 27](#)]

[\(Before 9:37 a.m.\) September 11, 2001: Defense Secretary Rumsfeld Said to Make Eerie Predictions, but Witness Who Gives Account Is Long Gone](#)

Representative Christopher Cox (R-CA) will later claim he is still meeting with Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld at this time. They are still discussing missile defense, apparently completely oblivious of the approaching Flight 77. Watching television coverage from New York City, Rumsfeld says to Cox: "Believe me, this isn't over yet. There's going to be another attack, and it could be us." According to the Daily Telegraph, Flight 77 hits the building "moments later." [[Daily Telegraph, 12/16/2001](#)] In another telling, Cox will claim that Rumsfeld says: "If we remain vulnerable to missile attack, a terrorist group or rogue state that demonstrates the capacity to strike the US or its allies from long range could have the power to hold our entire country hostage to nuclear or other blackmail. And let me tell you, I've been around the block a few times. There will be another event." Rumsfeld repeats this sentence for emphasis. According to Cox, "Within minutes of that utterance, Rumsfeld's words proved tragically prophetic." Cox also claims, "I escaped just minutes before the building was hit." [[Office of Representative Christopher Cox, 9/11/2001](#)] However, Rumsfeld will claim that this meeting with Cox ended before the second World Trade Center crash, which occurred at 9:03 a.m. Cox himself will say that after being told of that crash, "[Rumsfeld] sped off, as did I." Cox will say he immediately headed to his car, making it impossible for him to still be in the Pentagon "just minutes before" it is hit. [[Associated Press, 9/11/2001](#)] Another account will put Rumsfeld's "I've been around the block a few times. There will be another event" comment two minutes before the first WTC crash at 8:46 a.m., when Rumsfeld reportedly made other predictive comments. [[Associated Press, 9/16/2001](#)]

Before 9:37 a.m. September 11, 2001: Pentagon Clinic Has Crisis Equipment Ready Due to Inventory



Major Lorie Brown. [Source: *US Medicine*]The DiLorenzo Tricare Health Clinic inside the Pentagon has its equipment for dealing with mass casualty (MASCAL) incidents out of storage this morning, because staff members are doing an inventory. Major Lorie Brown, the chief nurse, will need to initiate the clinic's MASCAL disaster plan after the Pentagon is hit at 9:37 a.m. (see [Soon after 9:37 a.m. September 11, 2001](#)). She later says, "So there were many pieces that just fell into place and worked so well on that day. It was just fortuitous. It was just amazing that way that things kind of happened the way they did." [*Nursing Spectrum*, 9/24/2001; *Office of Medical History*, 9/2004, pp. 7]

(9:36 a.m.-9:39 a.m.) September 11, 2001: Emergency Workers See and Promptly Report Low-Flying Flight 77 Approaching the Pentagon and Crashing



Sergeant William Lagasse. [Source: *Citizen Investigation Team*]Several police officers and firefighters see the low-flying Flight 77 as it approaches the Pentagon and crashes. They quickly report this to their own agencies or to the Arlington County Emergency Communications Center (ECC), which is the focal point of all police and fire 911 calls for the county. [*Goldberg et al.*, 2007, pp. 66]

■Arlington County Police Department Corporal Barry Foust is stopped at traffic lights less than two miles from the Pentagon, and spots the aircraft flying low, then sees a plume of smoke. [*Goldberg et al.*, 2007, pp. 13] He immediately calls the ECC and calmly reports: "I think we just had an airplane crash east of here. Must be in the District area." [*Washington Post*, 9/17/2001 ; *Associated Press*, 9/18/2001; *US Department of Health and Human Services*, 7/2002, pp. C6]

■Police Motorcycle Officer Richard Cox is standing near a diner less than a mile from the Pentagon. Hearing a sudden roar, he turns and reportedly sees the plane "directly overhead... no more than a hundred feet off the ground." [*Vogel*, 2007, pp. 427] He calls the ECC and reports, "It's an American Airlines plane headed eastbound over the [Columbia] Pike, possibly headed for the Pentagon." [*Washington Post*, 9/17/2001 ; *Associated Press*, 9/18/2001; *US Department of Health and Human Services*, 7/2002, pp. C6]

■Fire Captain Steve McCoy and his crew are traveling north on Interstate 395 in ACFD Engine 101, for a training session in Crystal City. McCoy reportedly sees "a commercial airliner in steep descent, banking sharply to its right before disappearing beyond the horizon," followed by "a tremendous explosion" and "a massive plume of smoke and fire." He immediately radioes ECC and reports, "We got a plane down, it looks like in the Crystal City area by the 14th Street Bridge." Being aware of the attacks on the World Trade Center, he advises that the FBI should be notified, as this is a possible terrorist attack. [*US Department of Health and Human Services*, 7/2002, pp. A4; *Goldberg et al.*, 2007, pp. 66]

■Officer Mark Bright of the Defense Protective Service (DPS)—the Pentagon's police force—is manning the security booth at the Pentagon's Mall entrance, when he hears a loud noise. He will recall: "I saw the plane at the Navy Annex area [a few hundred yards from the Pentagon]. I knew it was going to strike the building because it was very, very low—at the height of the street lights." As soon as he sees it hit the Pentagon he radioes in his report of the attack, and then speeds in his police cruiser to the crash site, becoming the first officer there. [*American Forces Press Service*, 9/24/2001; *Washington Post*, 10/25/2001; *Goldberg et al.*, 2007, pp. 152]

■Sergeant William Lagasse, also a member of the DPS, is filling up his patrol car at a gas station near the Pentagon. He recalls that he sees an “American Airlines 757... approximately 100 feet above the ground level, maybe 60 feet in front of me.” He watches the plane crash into the Pentagon. His first reaction is to call the DPS Communications Center and state, “An aircraft has just flown into the side of the building.” He then grabs his medical bag and dashes to the crash scene. [*Washington Post*, 10/25/2001; [Library of Congress](#), 12/4/2001]

■Alan Wallace and Mark Skipper of the Fort Myer Fire Department are manning the fire station by the Pentagon heliport, and are outside checking their truck. Wallace glances up and sees the plane coming at them, and the two men then dive for cover (see [9:37 a.m. September 11, 2001](#)). Wallace promptly radioes the fire department headquarters at Fort Myer, and reports that an airliner has hit the west side of the Pentagon. [*Goldberg et al.*, 2007, pp. 65]

Partly due to these calls, many emergency responders quickly learn of the crash and are able to arrive at the Pentagon within minutes of it (see [9:40 a.m.-9:43 a.m. September 11, 2001](#)). [*Goldberg et al.*, 2007, pp. 66] Some fire and rescue units from Arlington County and elsewhere also respond—self-dispatching from stations or diverting from other destinations—after hearing Captain McCoy’s radio message to the ECC. [*US Department of Health and Human Services*, 7/2002, pp. A4]

[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. [*MDW News Service*, 10/4/2001; *Pentagram*, 11/2/2001; *JEMS*, 4/2002; *US Department of Health and Human Services*, 7/2002; *First Due News*, 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.” [*Pentagram*, 9/14/2001]

[9:37 a.m. September 11, 2001: Unlike Other Three Crashes, Pentagon Attack Does Not Produce Clear Seismic Signal](#)

The strike on the Pentagon does not generate a clear seismic signal. A study by the Maryland Geological Survey will state, “We analyzed seismic records from five stations in the northeastern United States, ranging from 63 to 350 km from the Pentagon. Despite detailed analysis of the data, we could not find a clear seismic signal. Even the closest station... did not record the impact. We concluded that the plane impact to the Pentagon generated relatively weak seismic signals.” The study, which is conducted at the request of the Army, states that there are seismic signals for the two planes impacting the World Trade Center and for the Flight 93 crash in Pennsylvania, which allow times to be determined for these events. [*Kim and Baum*, 2002]

[9:37 a.m. September 11, 2001: Pentagon Law Enforcement Deputy Finally Makes Call to Raise Alert Level](#)

At the time the Pentagon is struck, a member of the Defense Protective Service (DPS), which guards the Pentagon, is in the process of ordering the threat level be raised. John Pugrud, the deputy chief of the DPS, has met with DPS Chief John Jester, and Jester directed him to instruct the DPS Communications Center to raise the Force Protection Condition up one level, from Normal to Alpha (see [\(Shortly Before 9:37 a.m.\) September 11, 2001](#)). The moment the Pentagon is hit, Pugrud has the phone in his hand to dial the center. When his call is answered, he can hear the center’s alarms activating and radio calls taking place. The dispatcher yells: “We’ve been hit! We’ve been hit! Wedge one. Wedge one.” According to the Defense Department’s book about the Pentagon attack, no one in DPS has received any warning of a hijacked aircraft heading toward Washington. [*Goldberg et al.*, 2007, pp. 152] No steps have been taken to alert Pentagon employees or evacuate the building. [*Vogel*, 2007, pp. 429] Around 30 minutes after the attack occurs, the US military will increase its threat level to Defcon Delta, the highest possible level (see [\(Between 10:10 a.m. and 10:35 a.m.\) September 11, 2001](#)). [*CNN*, 9/4/2002] This will be reduced to “Charlie” before the end of the week. [*US Department of Defense*, 9/16/2001; *USA Today*, 9/16/2001]

[9:37 a.m. September 11, 2001: Navy Command Center Employees Killed While Trying to Get More Fighters Launched](#)

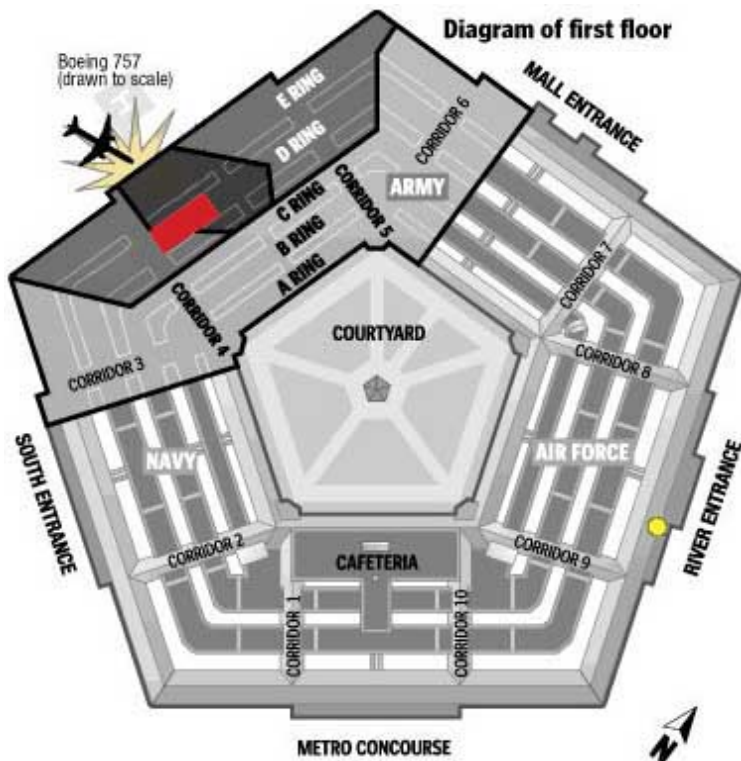


Diagram showing the area of impact at the Pentagon. The Navy Command Center is highlighted in red. [Source: *Washington Post*] (click image to enlarge) Edward Earhart, Matthew Flocco, and their supervisor Lt. Nancy McKeown are inside the Pentagon, watching the televised footage of the burning World Trade Center. They belong to a small meteorological unit based in the Navy Command Center, located on the first floor of the building's southwest face. McKeown asks her two young aides to bring up New York on the computer because the Command Center is going to send some fighter jets there, in case there is another attack on the city. She orders them to program weather updates for military aircraft converging on New York. However, very soon after this, the Command Center is directly impacted when the Pentagon is hit, and both Flocco and Earhart are killed. [Washington Post, 9/16/2001; *Reader's Digest*, 9/2002; CNN, 9/8/2002; *Newsday*, 4/12/2006] Ronald Vauk, the watch commander in the Navy Command Center, is on the phone trying to get more fighters scrambled at the time the Pentagon is hit, though news reports say he wants them to protect Washington, not New York. [John Hopkins Magazine, 11/2001; *New York Times*, 11/17/2001; *Baltimore Sun*, 9/11/2002] At 9:24 a.m., NORAD had ordered fighters at Langley Air Force Base in Virginia to scramble (see 9:24 a.m. September 11, 2001), though these will not arrive over the Pentagon until after it is hit (see (Between 9:49 a.m. and 11:00 a.m.) September 11, 2001). [9/11 Commission, 6/17/2004] According to Lt. Kevin Shaeffer, who works in the Command Center, just prior to the attack on the Pentagon, the watch section and watch leaders in the center are actively engaged in logging and recording the events going on in New York. He later says, "they all responded in exactly the way they were trained," and, "Had the Command Center not been destroyed it surely would have been able to provide the highest levels of our Navy leadership with updates as to exactly what was occurring." [Chips, 3/2003]

9:37 a.m. September 11, 2001: Defense Secretary Rumsfeld Feels Pentagon Shake When It Is Hit, Allegedly Thinks Bomb Has Gone Off

According to most accounts, at the time the Pentagon is hit, Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld is in his office on the third floor of the Pentagon's outer E Ring, receiving his daily intelligence briefing. [New York Times, 9/12/2001; Woodward, 2002, pp. 24; 9/11 Commission, 3/23/2004; Clarke, 2006, pp. 221; Cockburn, 2007, pp. 1; Goldberg et al., 2007, pp. 130; Vogel, 2007, pp. 438-439] As he later recalls, "the building shook and the tables jumped." [Goldberg et al., 2007, pp. 130] Although he has been informed of the two aircraft hitting the World Trade Center (see Shortly After 8:46 a.m. September 11, 2001 and (Shortly After 9:03 a.m.) September 11, 2001), he supposedly does not initially suspect a plane has hit the Pentagon, thinking instead that a bomb has gone off. [ABC News, 9/16/2001; MSNBC, 9/30/2001; Washington Post, 1/9/2002] In his nearby office, Rumsfeld's senior military assistant Vice Admiral Edmund Giambastiani Jr. also hears the explosion, and walks through his doorway toward Rumsfeld's office. As the two meet, Rumsfeld asks Giambastiani, "What the hell's happening?" [American Forces Press Service, 9/8/2006; Goldberg et al., 2007, pp. 130] Rumsfeld then looks out his window but, he later recalls, sees "nothing here." [Parade Magazine, 10/12/2001; Washington Post, 1/9/2002] He goes into the hallway and, accompanied by his security guards, hurries toward the crash site (see 9:38 a.m. September 11, 2001). [Goldberg et al., 2007, pp. 130] However, counterterrorism "tsar" Richard Clarke will later contradict these accounts. Clarke indicates that Rumsfeld has been participating in the video teleconference conducted from the White House Situation Room since shortly after the second WTC crash (see (9:10 a.m.) September 11, 2001). He claims that Rumsfeld is still involved in this conference at the time the Pentagon is hit, and he tells his deputy, "I can still see Rumsfeld on the screen, so the whole building didn't get hit." [Clarke, 2004, pp. 2-3 and 7-8] If Clarke's account were correct, this would presumably mean Rumsfeld is in the Pentagon's

Executive Support Center (ESC), which has secure video facilities, rather than in his office. [[Washington Times, 2/23/2004](#)] But according to other accounts, Rumsfeld does not go to the ESC until around 10:15 a.m., after he returns from the crash site (see [\(10:00 a.m.-10:30 a.m.\) September 11, 2001](#)). [[Clarke, 2006, pp. 221](#); [Cockburn, 2007, pp. 1-5](#)]

9:37 a.m.-9:39 a.m. September 11, 2001: Pentagon Command Center Begins Air Threat Conference Call

The National Military Command Center (NMCC) at the Pentagon commences an “air threat conference” at 9:37 a.m. in response to the terrorist attacks, which will last for more than eight hours and have numerous high-level government and military officials participating at various times.

NORAD Reports Two More Hijackings - Captain Charles Leidig opens the call at 9:39 a.m. [[9/11 Commission, 7/24/2004, pp. 37-38](#)] As the acting deputy director for operations (DDO) in the NMCC during the attacks, Leidig is responsible for moderating the air threat conference and generating a military response to the crisis. [[9/11 Commission, 4/29/2004](#)] He begins the call saying: “An air attack against North America may be in progress. NORAD, what’s the situation?” NORAD says it has conflicting reports, and its latest information is of “a possible hijacked aircraft taking off out of JFK [International Airport in New York], en route to Washington, DC.” [[9/11 Commission, 7/24/2004, pp. 38](#)] NORAD says the FAA has also passed it information about a second additional hijacking. Major Charles Chambers, who is currently on duty in the NMCC, will later recall, “This was probably a communications mix-up, but we all thought for a while that there were a total of five hijackings.” [[US Department of Defense, 9/2001](#)]

NMCC Reports Pentagon Attack - The NMCC reports that there has been a crash into the mall side of the Pentagon and requests that the secretary of defense be added to the conference. (However, despite being in the Pentagon when it is hit, Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld will not enter the NMCC and join the air threat conference until around 10:30 a.m. (see [\(10:30 a.m.\) September 11, 2001](#)).) [[9/11 Commission, 7/24/2004, pp. 38](#)] The air threat conference is broadcast over a loudspeaker inside the NMCC. [[US News and World Report, 8/31/2003](#)] According to Chambers, “Questions were flying left and right on the conference, and trying to keep things straight was very difficult.” [[US Department of Defense, 9/2001](#)]

NORAD Recommended Air Threat Conference - Leidig and Commander Pat Gardner, the assistant DDO, had earlier on decided to convene an all-purpose “significant event conference” in response to the attacks on the World Trade Center. That call commenced at 9:29 a.m. (see [9:29 a.m.-9:34 a.m. September 11, 2001](#)). NORAD had recommended that it be reconvened as an air threat conference. [[9/11 Commission, 4/29/2004](#)]; [[9/11 Commission, 7/24/2004, pp. 37](#)] According to Chambers, an air threat conference is used when aircraft are considered to be hostile and involves many more people than are in a significant event conference, including the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, the secretary of defense, and officials from the White House. [[US Department of Defense, 9/2001](#)] However, Leidig thought a significant event conference was the correct kind of call for the situation. He will tell the 9/11 Commission that an air threat conference “had Cold War implications and brought a different group of people to a conference.” [[9/11 Commission, 4/29/2004](#)]

Deputy Director Ordered Upgrading of Conference - All the same, Leidig gave the order to transition to an air threat conference. [[9/11 Commission, 7/24/2004, pp. 37](#)] He will tell the 9/11 Commission that, in retrospect, the reason he thinks he did so “was because he perceived an air threat at that time.” [[9/11 Commission, 4/29/2004](#)] Therefore, the significant event conference was brought to an end at around 9:34 a.m., and resumes as an air threat conference three minutes later. [[9/11 Commission, 7/24/2004, pp. 37](#)] Staff Sergeant Val Harrison could have established the air threat conference either by leaving all of those participating in the significant event conference on the line and then adding new participants one at a time, or by simply hanging up on everyone in the significant event conference and then having the computer do a mass dialing. Harrison recommended the second option. Leidig had agreed, and directed her to disconnect the conference call and start over.

Problem with Connecting Some Agencies - As happened with the significant event conference, there are problems connecting several agencies to the air threat conference. [[US Department of Defense, 9/2001](#)] Despite repeated attempts, operators struggle to get the FAA connected (see [\(9:29 a.m.-12:00 p.m.\) September 11, 2001](#)), and it will take until 10:17 a.m. for an FAA representative to finally join the call (see [10:17 a.m. September 11, 2001](#)). [[9/11 Commission, 7/21/2003](#)]; [[9/11 Commission, 7/24/2004, pp. 37](#)] Other agencies had not understood what Leidig meant about convening the new conference, and so did not hang up their phones when the NMCC disconnected the previous conference call. As a result, all the NMCC got from them was a busy signal over the line. Chambers will recall, “As with the [significant event conference], it took longer than expected to convene the [air threat conference].” [[US Department of Defense, 9/2001](#)]

Top Officials Participate - Throughout the more than eight hours the air threat conference is running for, numerous key officials will participate in it at various times, including President Bush, Vice President Dick Cheney, Deputy National Security Adviser Stephen Hadley, acting Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Richard Myers, military personnel from the Presidential Emergency Operations Center below the White House, and the president’s military aide on Air Force One. [[9/11 Commission, 7/24/2004, pp. 37](#)] Brigadier General Montague Winfield, the original DDO, who had Leidig take his place so he could attend a pre-scheduled meeting (see [8:30 a.m. September 11, 2001](#)), will later recall, “All of the governmental agencies... that were involved in any activity that was going on in the United States... were in that conference.” [[ABC News, 9/11/2002](#)]

Winfield Runs Conference after Returning to Post - Winfield will take over the running of the air threat conference from Leidig after returning to his post at around 10:30 a.m. (see [\(10:30 a.m.\) September 11, 2001](#)). [[CNN, 9/4/2002](#); [9/11 Commission, 4/29/2004](#)]; [[9/11 Commission, 6/17/2004](#)] But although NMCC conference calls are moderated by the DDO, Rumsfeld will use the DDO’s phone to participate in the air threat conference, meaning that Winfield is unable to moderate the conference when the defense secretary is participating. [[9/11 Commission, 7/21/2003](#)]

9:37 a.m. September 11, 2001: Flight 77 Crashes into Reinforced Section of the Pentagon, Killing 189



The Pentagon explodes. [Source: Donley/ Sipa] Flight 77 crashes into the Pentagon. All 64 people on the plane are killed. A hundred-and-twenty-four people working in the building are killed, and a further victim will die in hospital several days later. Hijackers Hani Hanjour, Khalid Almihdhar, Majed Moqed, Nawaf Alhazmi, and Salem Alhazmi presumably are killed instantly. (Typically, they are not included in the death counts.) [CNN, 9/17/2001; North American Aerospace Defense Command, 9/18/2001; Guardian, 10/17/2001; Washington Post, 11/21/2001; USA Today, 8/13/2002; Associated Press, 8/21/2002; MSNBC, 9/3/2002; ABC News, 9/11/2002; CBS News, 9/11/2002] Flight 77 hits the first floor of the Pentagon's west wall. The impact and the resulting explosion heavily damage the building's three outer rings. The path of destruction cuts through Army accounting offices on the outer E Ring, the Navy Command Center on the D Ring, and the Defense Intelligence Agency's comptroller's office on the C Ring. [Vogel, 2007, pp. 431 and 449] Flight 77 strikes the only side of the Pentagon that had recently been renovated—it was “within days of being totally [renovated].” [US Department of Defense, 9/15/2001] “It was the only area of the Pentagon with a sprinkler system, and it had been reconstructed with a web of steel columns and bars to withstand bomb blasts. The area struck by the plane also had blast-resistant windows—two inches thick and 2,500 pounds each—that stayed intact during the crash and fire. While perhaps, 4,500 people normally would have been working in the hardest-hit areas, because of the renovation work only about 800 were there.” More than 25,000 people work at the Pentagon. [Los Angeles Times, 9/16/2001] Furthermore, the plane hits an area that has no basement. As journalist Steve Vogel later points out, “If there had been one under the first floor, its occupants could easily have been trapped by fire and killed when the upper floors collapsed.” [Vogel, 2007, pp. 450]

9:37 a.m. September 11, 2001: Fireman Dodges Flight 77; Immediately Notifies Superior about Crashed Jumbo Jet



Internet researchers have put together this image showing how an object the size of a jumbo jet clips a number of light poles and then destroys columns inside the Pentagon. [From website] [Source: Eric Bart] (click image to enlarge) Fireman Alan Wallace is busy with a safety crew at the Pentagon's heliport pad. As Wallace is walking in front of the Pentagon, he looks up and sees Flight 77 coming straight at him. It is about 25 feet off the ground, with no landing wheels visible, a few hundred yards away, and closing fast. He runs about 30 feet and dives under a nearby van. [Washington Post, 9/21/2001] The plane is traveling at about 460 mph, and flying so low that it clips the tops of streetlights. [CBS News, 9/21/2001] Using the radio in the van, he calls his fire chief at nearby Fort Myer and says, “We have had a commercial carrier crash into the west side of the Pentagon at the heliport, Washington Boulevard side. The crew is OK. The airplane was a 757 Boeing or a 320 Airbus.” [Scripps Howard News Service, 8/1/2002]

9:37 a.m. September 11, 2001: Pentagon's 'War Room' Doesn't Realize Building Has Been Hit, Despite Hearing Explosion

Those inside the Pentagon's Executive Support Center (ESC) feel and hear the impact when the building is hit, yet supposedly do not realize what has happened. Victoria Clarke, the assistant secretary of defense for public affairs, who is in the ESC at this time, calls the center "the Pentagon's war room, with instant access to satellite images and intelligence sources peering into every corner of the globe." She describes it as "the place where the building's top leadership goes to coordinate military operations during national emergencies." In it with her are Stephen Cambone, Donald Rumsfeld's closest aide, and Larry Di Rita, Rumsfeld's personal chief of staff. They'd been discussing how to go about getting every plane currently in the air back on the ground when, according to Clarke, "we felt a jarring thump and heard a loud but still muffled explosion. The building seemed to have shifted." Yet, despite all the ESC's resources, they supposedly do not initially realize exactly what has happened. Clarke says to the others, "It must have been a car bomb." Di Rita replies, "A bomb of some kind." But one unnamed staffer who frequently uses the ESC for meetings points to the ceiling and says, "No, it's just the heating and cooling system. It makes that noise all the time." Clarke later claims, "The notion of a jetliner attacking the Pentagon was exactly that unfathomable back then. Our eyes were glued to television screens showing two hijacked planes destroying the World Trade Center and it still didn't occur to any of us, certainly not me, that one might have just hit our own building." Clarke guesses aloud that the noise was something other than the heating and cooling system. In the ensuing minutes, she and the others with her will scramble "for information about what exactly *had* happened, how many were hurt or killed, and [analyze] what we could do to prevent further attacks." Yet, she will later claim, it is only when Donald Rumsfeld comes into the ESC at 10:15 a.m., after having gone to the crash scene, that they receive their first confirmation that a plane has hit the Pentagon (see [10:00 a.m.-10:30 a.m. September 11, 2001](#)). [[Clarke, 2006, pp. 219-221](#)] Those inside the National Military Command Center (NMCC), located next door to the ESC, supposedly do not feel the impact when the Pentagon is hit, and one officer there claims he only learns of the attack from television reports (see [Shortly After 9:37 a.m. September 11, 2001](#)). [[CNN, 9/4/2002](#); [American Forces Press Service, 9/7/2006](#); [Cockburn, 2007, pp. 5](#)] But Secretary of Defense Rumsfeld, who is in his office about 200 feet away from the ESC, feels the building shake due to the explosion. After seeing nothing out of his window, he immediately dashes outside to determine what has happened (see [9:38 a.m. September 11, 2001](#)). [[WBZ Radio 1030 \(Boston\), 9/15/2001](#); [Parade Magazine, 10/12/2001](#); [Washington Post, 1/9/2002](#); [9/11 Commission, 3/23/2004](#)]

9:37 a.m. September 11, 2001: Flight 77 Misses Key Pentagon Officials

When Flight 77 hits the Pentagon, it misses the parts of the building known to house the military's most senior leaders. Journalist and author Steve Vogel later says, "The hijackers had not hit the River or Mall sides" of the building, "where the senior military leadership had been concentrated since 1942." At the time of the attack, Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld is "sitting in the same third-floor office above the River entrance as every secretary of defense since Louis Johnson in 1949, a location that had been a matter of public record all that time. The joint chiefs and all the service secretaries were arrayed in various prime E-Ring offices on the River and Mall sides." Furthermore, "All the command centers save the Navy's were on the River or Mall sides; the National Military Command Center could have been decimated as the Navy Command Center was, a disaster that could have effectively shut down the Pentagon as the first American war of the twenty-first century began." Instead, the area hit comprises Army accounting offices, the Navy Command Center, and the Defense Intelligence Agency's comptroller's office. [[Vogel, 2007, pp. 431 and 449-450](#)] Due to recent renovation work, many offices in that section of the Pentagon are currently empty. [[Government Executive, 9/11/2001](#)]

9:37 a.m. September 11, 2001: Witnesses See Military Cargo Plane near Flight 77; Pilot Later Implies He Is Far Away

A C-130 transport plane that has been sent to follow Flight 77 (see [9:36 a.m. September 11, 2001](#)) is trailing only a short distance behind the plane as it crashes. This curious C-130, originally bound for Minnesota, is the same C-130 that will be 17 miles from Flight 93 when it later crashes into the Pennsylvania countryside (see [10:08 a.m. September 11, 2001](#)). [[Pittsburgh Channel, 9/15/2001](#); [Star-Tribune \(Minneapolis\), 9/11/2002](#)] A number of people see this plane fly remarkably close to Flight 77:

■ Kelly Knowles says that seconds after seeing Flight 77 pass, she sees a "second plane that seemed to be chasing the first [pass] over at a slightly different angle." [[Daily Press \(Newport News\), 9/15/2001](#)]

■ Keith Wheelhouse says the second plane is a C-130; two other witnesses are not certain. [[Daily Press \(Newport News\), 9/15/2001](#)] Wheelhouse "believes it flew directly above the American Airlines jet, as if to prevent two planes from appearing on radar, while at the same time guiding the jet toward the Pentagon." As Flight 77 descends toward the Pentagon, the second plane veers off west. [[Daily Press \(Newport News\), 9/14/2001](#)]

■ USA Today reporter Vin Narayanan, who sees the Pentagon explosion, later says, "I hopped out of my car after the jet exploded, nearly oblivious to a second jet hovering in the skies." [[USA Today, 9/17/2001](#)]

■ USA Today Editor Joel Sucherman sees a second plane but gives few details. [[eWeek, 9/13/2001](#)]

■ Brian Kennedy, press secretary for a Congressman, and others also see a second plane. [[Sacramento Bee, 9/15/2001](#)]

■ An unnamed worker at Arlington National Cemetery, which is about a mile from the Pentagon, will recall that "a mysterious second plane was circling the area when the first one attacked the Pentagon." [[Pittsburgh Post-Gazette, 12/20/2001](#)]

■ An interment foreman at Arlington Cemetery also sees a second plane. He will recall: "There was a second plane behind it.... It appeared to be a cargo plane... mostly white.... I think it was somebody who observed him [Flight 77] and was following him and saw where he was going or what was going on... he was probably behind that far and when he saw [the explosion], he banked it back hard and went back the other way." [[Army Center for Military History, 12/13/2001](#)]

■ John O'Keefe is driving in his car when he sees the Pentagon crash. He will recall: "The first thing I did was pull over onto the shoulder, and when I got out of the car I saw another plane flying over my head.... Then the plane—it looked like a C-130 cargo

plane—started turning away from the Pentagon, it did a complete turnaround.” [[New York Law Journal, 9/12/2001](#)]

■Phillip Thompson, a former Marine, is sitting in traffic when he witnesses the crash of Flight 77 and then sees a cargo plane overhead. He will recall that, following the Flight 77 crash, “a gray C-130 flew overhead, setting off a new round of panic. I tried to reassure people that the plane was not a threat.” [[Militarycity \(.com\), 9/22/2001](#)]

The pilot of the C-130, Lieutenant Colonel Steve O’Brien, will later be interviewed, but his account differs from the on-the-ground eyewitnesses. He will claim that just before the explosion, “With all of the East Coast haze, I had a hard time picking him out,” implying he is not nearby. He also says that just after the explosion, “I could see the outline of the Pentagon,” again implying he is not nearby. He then asks “the controller whether [I] should set up a low orbit around the building,” but he is told “to get out of the area as quickly as possible.” He will add, “I took the plane once through the plume of smoke and thought if this was a terrorist attack, it probably wasn’t a good idea to be flying through that plume.” [[Star-Tribune \(Minneapolis\), 9/11/2002](#)]

(After 9:37 a.m.) September 11, 2001: FBI Confiscates Film of Pentagon Crash

An employee at a gas station located across the street from the Pentagon servicing military personnel later says the station’s security cameras should have recorded the moment of impact. However, he says, “I’ve never seen what the pictures looked like. The FBI was here within minutes and took the film.” [[Richmond Times-Dispatch, 12/11/2001](#)] A security camera atop a hotel close to the Pentagon also records the impact. Hotel employees watch the film several times before the FBI confiscates the video. [[Washington Times, 9/21/2001](#)] The Justice Department will refuse to release the footage, claiming that if they did it might provide intelligence to someone who would want to harm the US, but some Pentagon officials say they see no national security value to the video. [[CNN, 3/7/2002](#)] The gas station footage and video taken from one nearby hotel, the Doubletree, will eventually be released in 2006, but do not show much (see [September 13, 2006-Early December 2006](#)). Reporter Sandra Jontz, who is evacuated from the Pentagon some time after it is hit, notices a Department of Transportation camera that monitors traffic backups pointed towards the crash site. [[Bull and Erman, 2002, pp. 281](#)] As of the end of 2006, the footage from this camera has not been released.

9:38 a.m. September 11, 2001: Defense Secretary Rumsfeld Dashes toward Crash Site Seconds after Pentagon Is Hit

Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld heads for the crash site immediately after the Pentagon is hit. At the time of the attack, Rumsfeld is in his office proceeding with his regularly scheduled CIA briefing, despite being aware of the two attacks on the World Trade Center earlier on. Waiting outside his door is Officer Aubrey Davis of the Pentagon police, who is assigned to the defense secretary’s personal bodyguard and has come of his own initiative to move Rumsfeld to a better-protected location. According to Davis, there is “an incredibly loud ‘boom,’” as the Pentagon is struck. Just 15 or 20 seconds later, Rumsfeld walks out of his door looking composed, having already put on the jacket he normally discards when in his office. Davis informs him there is a report of an airplane hitting a section of the Pentagon known as the Mall. Rumsfeld sets off without saying anything or informing any of his command staff where he is going, and heads swiftly toward the Mall. Davis accompanies him, as does Rumsfeld’s other security guard Gilbert Oldach, his communications officer, and the deputy director of security for the secretary’s office. Finding no sign of damage at the Mall, Davis tells Rumsfeld, “[N]ow we’re hearing it’s by the heliport,” which is along the next side of the building. Despite Davis’s protests that he should head back, Rumsfeld continues onward, and they go outside near where the crash occurred. [[Cockburn, 2007, pp. 1-2; Goldberg et al., 2007, pp. 130; Democracy Now!, 3/7/2007](#)] The Pentagon was hit on the opposite site of the huge building to Rumsfeld’s office. [[Reuters, 9/11/2001](#)] Assistant Secretary of Defense for Public Affairs Victoria Clarke will say that Rumsfeld is “one of the first people” to arrive at the crash scene. [[KYW Radio 1060 \(Philadelphia\), 9/15/2001](#)] He spends a brief time there (see [Between 9:38 a.m. and 10:00 a.m. September 11, 2001](#)), before returning to the building by about 10:00 a.m., according to his own account (see [10:00 a.m.-10:30 a.m. September 11, 2001](#)). [[9/11 Commission, 3/23/2004](#)] Rumsfeld will later justify his actions following the attack, saying, “I was going, which seemed to me perfectly logically, towards the scene of the accident to see what could be done and what had happened.” [[US Department of Defense, 8/12/2002](#)] As journalist Andrew Cockburn will point out, though, “[T]he country was under attack and yet the secretary of defense disappears for 20 minutes.” [[C-SPAN, 2/25/2007](#)] John Jester, the chief of the Defense Protective Service, which guards the Pentagon, will criticize Rumsfeld for heading to the crash scene at this time. He will say: “One of my officers tried to stop him and he just brushed him off. I told [Rumsfeld’s] staff that he should not have done that. He is in the national command authority; he should not have gone to the scene.” [[Historical Office, Office of the Secretary of Defense, 10/19/2001](#)] The numerous reports of Rumsfeld going outside to the crash scene are apparently contradicted by counterterrorism “tsar” Richard Clarke. In his 2004 book *Against All Enemies*, Clarke will give the impression that Rumsfeld never leaves a video conference for very long after the Pentagon is hit, except to move from one secure teleconferencing studio to another elsewhere in the Pentagon. [[Clarke, 2004, pp. 7-9](#)] However, video footage confirms that Rumsfeld does indeed go to the crash site. [[CNN, 8/17/2002](#)]

(9:38 a.m.) September 11, 2001: ‘Experienced Combat Arms Officers’ at Pentagon Think a Bomb Has Exploded There

A group of Army officers at the Pentagon initially thinks that a bomb has gone off in their building when it is attacked. Army Major Craig Collier and his colleagues are in their office on the second floor of the Pentagon’s C Ring, about 200 feet from where the building is hit. Collier will later recall: “[T]he building jolted and we heard a muffled boom, then a rumble.... All of my peers in the area are experienced combat arms officers, and we quickly agreed that it sounded and felt like a bomb.” [[Goldberg et al., 2007, pp.](#)

[26/](#) Numerous other Pentagon employees also initially think a bomb has gone off, and apparently only a few guess a plane has hit the place (see [\(9:38 a.m.\) September 11, 2001](#)).

(Shortly After 9:37 a.m.) September 11, 2001: Air Force Secretary and Chief of Staff Initially Unaware a Plane Has Hit Pentagon; Head to Operations Center



James Roche. [Source: *United States Air Force*] Secretary of the Air Force James Roche is in his office on the fourth floor of the Pentagon, along with Air Force Chief of Staff John Jumper. [[CNN, 10/10/2001](#); [Airman, 10/2002](#)] Both men had learned of the first attack on the WTC and seen the second attack live on television during a staff meeting in the Air Force Council conference room (see [\(9:00 a.m.-9:15 a.m.\) September 11, 2001](#)). [[Air Force Space Command News Service, 9/5/2002](#); [Goldberg et al., 2007, pp. 136](#)] They do not feel the impact when the Pentagon is hit at 9:37, being on the opposite side of the building to the crash. [[CNN, 10/10/2001](#); [Midland Reporter-Telegram, 4/2/2002](#)] They are initially unaware that a plane has hit the place. Reportedly, “for those first minutes and hours of confusion, rumors circulated about a bomb hitting the Pentagon.” Tim Green, the assistant executive to the Air Force chief of staff who is responsible for securing Jumper, will later recall: “It was amazing, from inside the building, how little we knew about what actually went on. People outside of the building... probably knew more about what happened from the news than I did.” Roche and Jumper, accompanied by Green, head down to the Air Force Operations Center. [[Midland Reporter-Telegram, 4/2/2002](#); [Goldberg et al., 2007, pp. 136](#)] The Operations Center is located in the basement of the Pentagon’s C Ring. In it, the Crisis Action Team (CAT) is carrying out emergency operations for the Air Force. [[Syracuse University Magazine, 12/2001](#)] Roche later recalls, “Once in our crisis action center, we found out that the building had been hit by an aircraft.” [[CNN, 10/10/2001](#)]

After 9:37 a.m. September 11, 2001: Some Witnesses Surprised by Lack of Plane Debris at the Pentagon



This piece of metal, apparently showing the red, white, and blue stripes worn by American Airlines, is said to be a piece of wreckage from Flight 77. [Source: *Associated Press*] Some emergency responders and other witnesses are surprised at the lack of major plane debris at the Flight 77 crash site at the Pentagon:

- Brian Ladd of the Fort Myer Fire Department arrives at the scene a few minutes after the attack. Yet, “Expecting to see pieces of the wings or fuselage,” he instead reportedly sees “millions of tiny pieces” of debris spread “everywhere.” [[Goldberg et al., 2007, pp. 68](#)]
- Captain John Durrer of the Metropolitan Washington Airports Authority Fire Department also arrives within minutes of the crash. He will later recall thinking: “Well where’s the airplane, you know, where’s the parts to it? You would think there’d be something.”

Reportedly, “The near total disintegration of the plane had left only a multitude of bits scattered outside the building.” [[Goldberg et al., 2007, pp. 70](#)]

■Sergeant Ronald Galey, a helicopter pilot with the US Park Police, arrives over the Pentagon in his helicopter within minutes of the attack (see [Shortly After 9:37 a.m. September 11, 2001](#)). He will describe what he sees there: “[I]t was a relatively small hole in the side of the building. I’m going, ‘This couldn’t possibly have been a 757.’ There’s absolutely nothing that you could identify as an aircraft part anywhere around there. Nothing. Just couldn’t have been.” Galey will add, “I just can’t emphasize enough, the initial damage, looking at it, it just didn’t look like a 757 hit that building.” [[US Naval Historical Center, 11/20/2001](#)]

■Sergeant Keith Bohn, another Park Police helicopter pilot, lands his helicopter near the crash site shortly after the attack. He will recall: “When I landed on the scene, there was actually a particular slit into the side of the Pentagon, which is hard to believe that an aircraft made it, but it’s that small of a slit.... I could not see any aviation parts. I couldn’t see an engine or a wing. There was just rubble, pieces, small pieces.” [[US Naval Historical Center, 11/19/2001](#)]

■Steve DeChiaro, the president of a New Jersey technology firm, had just arrived at the Pentagon when it was hit and ran toward the crash site. He will recall: “But when I looked at the site, my brain could not resolve the fact that it was a plane because it only seemed like a small hole in the building. No tail. No wings. No nothing.” [[Scripps Howard News Service, 8/1/2002](#)]

■Early in the afternoon, CNN Pentagon correspondent Jamie McIntyre reports: “[T]he only pieces left that you can see are small enough that you can pick up in your hand. There are no large tail sections, wing sections, fuselage, nothing like that anywhere around, which would indicate that the entire plane crashed into the side of the Pentagon and then caused the side to collapse.” [[CNN, 9/11/2001](#)]

■Sheryl Alleger, a Navy officer at the Pentagon, goes past the crash site in an ambulance in the afternoon. She will recall: “[Y]ou couldn’t see any bits of the airplane, that was the thing that got me.... I expected to see the tail sticking out.... But—nothing. It was like the building swallowed the plane.” [[Hilton, 2002, pp. 143](#)]

■Eileen Murphy, a nurse at the Pentagon’s DiLorenzo Tricare Health Clinic, will recall: “I expected to see the airplane, so I guess my initial impression was: ‘Where’s the plane? How come there’s not a plane?’ I would have thought the building would have stopped it and somehow we would have seen something like part of, or half of the plane, or the lower part, or the back of the plane. So it was just a real surprise that the plane wasn’t there.” [[Office of Medical History, 9/2004, pp. 96](#)]

■Sergeant Reginald Powell, a radiologist at the DiLorenzo Tricare Health Clinic, will say: “I was in awe that I saw no plane, nothing left from the plane. It was like it disintegrated as it went into the building.” [[Office of Medical History, 9/2004, pp. 119](#)]

■Captain Dennis Gilroy, acting commander of the Fort Myer Fire Department, reportedly “wondered why he saw no aircraft parts” when he arrives at the scene. [[Goldberg et al., 2007, pp. 68](#)]

Other witnesses will say they come across some pieces of plane debris:

■Rich Fitzharris, an electrical engineer working at the Pentagon, later remembers seeing “small pieces of debris, the largest of which might have been part of an engine shroud.” [[Mlakar et al., 1/2003, pp. 13](#)]

■Allyn Kilsheimer, a structural engineer who arrives at the Pentagon at about 5:00 p.m., will recall: “I picked up parts of the plane with the airline markings on them. I held in my hand the tail section of the plane.” [[Popular Mechanics, 3/2005](#); [Goldberg et al., 2007, pp. 100](#)]

Later on during the day, the FBI arranges a search of the lawn in front of the crash site. According to the Defense Department’s book about the Pentagon attack: “Although much of the plane disintegrated within the Pentagon, the searchers found many scraps and a few personal items widely scattered on the grass and heliport. Plane remnants varied from half-dollar size to a few feet long.” [[Goldberg et al., 2007, pp. 159](#)] Also, one photo will show what appears to be plane debris on the lawn in front of the Pentagon, with the red, white, and blue stripes of American Airlines. [[Knight Ridder, 4/28/2002](#)]

(9:38 a.m.) September 11, 2001: Some inside Pentagon Think a Bomb Has Exploded There

Even though two planes have already crashed in New York, some people in the Pentagon initially think a bomb has gone off when their building is hit:

■Steve Carter, who is in the Building Operations Command Center on the first floor of the Pentagon, hears a “big boom,” and tells his assistant, “I think we just got hit by a bomb.” [[Vogel, 2007, pp. 434](#)]

■John Bowman, a retired Marine lieutenant colonel, is in his office near the main entrance to the Pentagon’s south parking lot at the time of the attack. He later describes, “Most people knew it was a bomb.” [[Pentagram, 9/14/2001](#)]

■Army Colonel Jonathan Fruendt is in his second floor office in the Pentagon’s inner A Ring, when he feels and hears “a very sharp jolt and the sound of an explosion.” He later recalls, “I thought it was a bomb that had gone off.” [[Office of Medical History, 9/2004, pp. 73](#)]

Apparently only a few people in the Pentagon initially guess a plane has hit the place. According to the Defense Department’s book about the Pentagon attack, among the few exceptions are Peter Murphy and his companions in the Marine Corps Office of the General Counsel, located on the fourth floor just above where the building is hit: “Unlike most other survivors, Murphy and his companions ‘were pretty certain it was a plane and it was a terrorist,’ even though they had not seen the plane coming in. They had been watching the attack on the Twin Towers and had speculated about such an attack on the Pentagon.” [[Goldberg et al., 2007, pp. 45](#)]

Shortly After 9:37 a.m. September 11, 2001: Officer in Pentagon Command Center Only Learns from TV that Pentagon Has Been Hit

The Pentagon's National Military Command Center (NMCC) is located on the other side of the building to where it is hit. Therefore, when the attack on the Pentagon occurs, those inside it supposedly do not feel the impact. [[CNN, 9/4/2002](#)] According to Newsweek, the NMCC has been called "the primary nerve system" of the Pentagon, from where "commanders can monitor and communicate with American forces around the world." [[Newsweek, 9/28/2001](#)] A military instruction for dealing with hijacked aircraft describes it as "the focal point within Department of Defense for providing assistance" in response to hijackings. [[US Department of Defense, 6/1/2001](#)] But supposedly NMCC personnel do not initially realize the Pentagon has been attacked. Steve Hahn, an operations officer at the center, later says, "I didn't know [the Pentagon had been hit] until I heard the news report on television." [[American Forces Press Service, 9/7/2006](#)] Yet an article in the New York Times later claims, "During the hour or so that American Airlines Flight 77 was under the control of hijackers, up to the moment it struck the west side of the Pentagon, military officials in [the NMCC] were urgently talking to law enforcement and air traffic control officials about what to do" (see [[Shortly After 8:51 a.m., September 11, 2001](#)]). [[New York Times, 9/15/2001](#)] Furthermore, at about 8:50 a.m. according to the FAA, or 9:20 a.m. according to the 9/11 Commission, the FAA had established several phone bridges linking key players, including the NMCC (see [[8:50 a.m., September 11, 2001](#)]) (see [[9:20 a.m., September 11, 2001](#)]). The FAA states that it shares "real-time information on the phone bridges," which includes "actions being taken by all the flights of interest, including Flight 77." [[9/11 Commission, 5/23/2003](#); [9/11 Commission, 7/24/2004, pp. 36](#)] Why NMCC personnel do not therefore know immediately that the Pentagon has been hit is unclear. Also around this time, Officer Aubrey Davis of the Pentagon police is outside Donald Rumsfeld's office. He hears what he later describes as "an incredibly loud 'boom,'" when the Pentagon is struck (see [[9:38 a.m., September 11, 2001](#)]). Yet no mention is made of anyone in the NMCC hearing this "boom," even though the center is located only around 200 feet from where Davis is standing. [[WBZ Radio 1030 \(Boston\), 9/15/2001](#); [Cockburn, 2007, pp. 1](#)] Dan Mangino, an operations officer in the NMCC, went out earlier to withdraw some money from a cash machine (see [[9:03 a.m., September 11, 2001](#)]), and rushes back to the center after the Pentagon is hit. He finds the people in it are very calm. He says, "There was no panic, no raised voices. We train for emergencies all the time, and that training took over." [[American Forces Press Service, 9/7/2006](#)]

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



Paul Carlton Jr. [*Source: Publicity photo*] 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. [[Nursing Spectrum, 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 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 Pernell 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](#)). [*MDW News Service, 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*]

(9:38 a.m.) September 11, 2001: Some Officers in Area Where Pentagon Is Hit Think Bombs Have Exploded



Lt. Col. Brian Birdwell. [*Source: Molly A. Burgess / US Army*] At least three Pentagon employees in the area of the building that is hit, and who narrowly survive the attack, initially believe that what they have experienced is a bomb, or bombs, going off:

■ John Thurman, an Army lieutenant colonel, is in a second floor office just above where the Pentagon is hit. [*Washington Post, 4/12/2006*] He later describes the moment of impact: "To me it didn't seem like a plane.... [T]o me it seemed like it was a bomb. Being in the military, I have been around grenade, artillery explosions. It was a two-part explosion to me.... [I]t seemed like that there was a percussion blast that blew me kind of backwards in my cubicle to the side. And then it seemed as if a massive explosion went off at the same time." He will add: "I had thought that perhaps the terrorists had surreptitiously gotten construction workers to come in and place explosives." [*United States of America v. Zacarias Moussaoui, a/k/a Shaqil, a/k/a Abu Khalid al Sahrawi, Defendant., 4/11/2006*]

■ Lt. Nancy McKeown is on the first floor of the Pentagon's D Ring in the Navy Command Center, which is mostly destroyed when the building is hit. [*Washington Post, 1/20/2002; Goldberg et al., 2007, pp. 30-31*] She will recall: "[I]t initially felt like an earthquake.... It sounded like a series of explosions going off.... It sounded like a series of bombs exploding, similar to like firecrackers when you light them and you just get a series going off." [*United States of America v. Zacarias Moussaoui, a/k/a Shaqil, a/k/a Abu Khalid al Sahrawi, Defendant., 4/11/2006*]

■ Army Lt. Col. Brian Birdwell is returning to his second floor office, and is just yards from where the building is impacted. [*9/11 Commission, 3/31/2003; Dallas Morning News, 9/7/2006*] "Bomb! I thought," he recalls of the moment the building is hit. [*US News and World Report, 12/2/2001; Today's Christian Woman, 7/1/2004*]

9:38 a.m. September 11, 2001: Pentagon Building Command Center Staff Confused as Attack Sets Off Over 300 Fire Alarms

Employees in the Pentagon's Building Operations Command Center (BOCC) do not realize a plane has hit their building, and are confused when over 300 of the Pentagon's fire alarms go off at once. [*Creed and Newman, 2008, pp. 31; WHYY-FM, 5/27/2008*] The BOCC, located on the first floor of the Pentagon's innermost corridor, is usually staffed by two or three people who constantly monitor the building's utility systems. [*Goldberg et al., 2007, pp. 137; Creed and Newman, 2008, pp. 31*] In it, Steve Carter and Kathy Greenwell felt the building tremble and heard a dull explosion when the Pentagon was hit. Their computers then show that, in an instant, 335 fire alarms have gone off, including the alarm for the BOCC itself. As authors Patrick Creed and Rick Newman will describe: "That didn't make sense. Normally, fire spreads slowly. If the computer was correct, 400,000 square feet of the Pentagon had erupted into flame all at once." Creed and Newman describe the plane impact that has caused this: "As the mass [of the aircraft] traveled through the building, it began to resemble a shaped charge, a form of explosive that funnels its force into a small, directed area—like a beam of energy—in order to punch holes through armor or other strong material." The entire event, from the moment of impact until the aircraft's movement is arrested, has "taken place in eight-tenths of a second." [*Creed and Newman, 2008, pp. 29-31*] Furthermore, an unusual pattern of explosions occurred when the aircraft struck the Pentagon. The Defense Department's book about the attack will describe: "The Jet A fuel atomized and quickly combusted, causing explosive bursts as the plane hurtled into the building. A detonation 150 feet inside the building resulted from a 'fuel-air' explosion after the Jet A tanks disintegrated on impact. Here, as elsewhere, there was no uniform pattern of death and destruction. The vagaries of the fuel-air explosions and freakish blast effects meant deaths occurred randomly inside the Pentagon, with the occupants of seemingly more secure interior offices sometimes suffering worse fates than those nearer the outside wall." [*Goldberg et al., 2007, pp. 37*] In the BOCC, not realizing what has happened, Carter says aloud: "I think we have a truck bomb! Or some kind of explosion!" [*Creed and Newman, 2008, pp. 31*] It is not until later in the day that he learns a plane hit the Pentagon. [*WHYY-FM, 5/27/2008*]

Shortly After 9:37 a.m. September 11, 2001: Supervisor at Army Airfield Sees Two Unidentified Aircraft on Radar. Circling above Pentagon



Davison Army Airfield. [Source: Airnav.com] Shortly after the Pentagon crash, an air traffic control supervisor at Davison Army Airfield sees two unidentified aircraft near the Pentagon on the radar of his facility, which is located at Fort Belvoir, about 12 miles south of the Pentagon. The supervisor, who is working in the airfield's control tower, looks out the window toward where the Pentagon is and sees a large black cloud of smoke. He is told by a colleague that news reports are saying a small airplane has hit the Pentagon. He then looks at the facility's radar scope, which shows two aircraft circling above the Pentagon. The transponder of one of these is transmitting the emergency code. The supervisor will recall: "I look at where the Pentagon area is [on the radar scope], and I look, and there was an aircraft squawking 7700, meaning emergency. And it was circling—it was coming down and fast.... [A]nd there was another target with no markings or anything—it was just a target," with none of the accompanying information that would be emitted by a transponder. This second aircraft is "descending rapidly and very fast." The supervisor will recall that the two aircraft "circled around and both tags they disappeared. But they stay in the air." He will provide no further information on the identities of the aircraft or why one of them is transmitting the emergency code. [US Army Center for Military History, 11/14/2001] There will be eyewitness accounts of aircraft near the Pentagon around this time (see [\(9:35 a.m.-9:36 a.m.\) September 11, 2001](#), [9:37 a.m. September 11, 2001](#), and [\(9:41 a.m.-9:42 a.m.\) September 11, 2001](#)).

(9:38 a.m.) September 11, 2001: Reagan Airport Controllers Alert Others to Pentagon Crash

After seeing the explosion from the attack on the Pentagon, air traffic controllers at Washington's Reagan National Airport promptly alert others to the crash, with a supervisor reporting that the crashed aircraft was an American Airlines 757. [[Federal Aviation Administration](#), 9/18/2001; [Spencer](#), 2008, pp. 158-159] Reagan Airport is less than a mile from the Pentagon. [[St. Petersburg Times](#), 9/19/2001] In its control tower, supervisor Chris Stephenson had looked out the window and seen Flight 77 approaching (see [\(9:36 a.m.\) September 11, 2001](#)). He watched it flying a full circle and disappearing behind a building in nearby Crystal City, before crashing into the Pentagon. Stephenson sees the resulting fireball and a mass of paper debris that fills the air. He calls the airport's Terminal Radar Approach Control (TRACON) and reports: "It was an American 757! It hit the Pentagon. It was a 757 and it hit the Pentagon. American!" [[USA Today](#), 8/11/2002; [Spencer](#), 2008, pp. 158-159] Other controllers see the fireball from the crash. One of them, David Walsh, activates the crash phone, which instantly connects the control tower to airport operations, as well as fire and police departments. He yells down the line: "Aircraft down at the Pentagon! Aircraft down at the Pentagon!" [[Federal Aviation Administration](#), 9/18/2001; [McDonnell](#), 2004, pp. 19-20]; [Spencer](#), 2008, pp. 158-159] Reagan Airport controllers contact controllers at Washington Dulles International Airport, who hear over the speakers in their room: "Dulles, hold all of our inbound traffic. The Pentagon's been hit." [[ABC News](#), 10/24/2001]

After 9:37 a.m. September 11, 2001: Emergency Responders Experience Communications Problems at Pentagon



Firefighters and other rescuers at the Pentagon crash site. *[Source: US Department of Defense]* Emergency responders and others at the Pentagon experience serious problems with communications following the attack there. These difficulties last for several hours. *[US Department of Health and Human Services, 7/2002, pp. 12-13; Goldberg et al., 2007, pp. 114]* According to a federally funded report on the emergency response to the Pentagon attack, communications systems had been busy “even before American Airlines Flight 77 crashed into the Pentagon.” But when the crash occurs, “all area communications [seem] simultaneously overwhelmed.” *[US Department of Health and Human Services, 7/2002, pp. A34]* The Defense Department’s book about the Pentagon attack later describes, “Almost immediately radio traffic gridlocked, land lines were unavailable, and cellular telephone networks became so overloaded that for a time Pentagon officials and employees as well as some emergency responders could not call outside.” *[Goldberg et al., 2007, pp. 114]* This leads to significant problems: “Firefighters calling the [Arlington County Emergency Communications Center] couldn’t get through. Relatives of Pentagon workers found cellular and land lines jammed.” *[US Department of Health and Human Services, 7/2002, pp. A34]* The DiLorenzo Tricare Health Clinic at the Pentagon and the Rader Clinic at nearby Fort Myer are unable to establish reliable communications. Reportedly, “Hospitals and clinics could not be informed about the flow of casualties, and perhaps more damaging, communication between the fire and rescue and the emergency medical elements on-site was severely impaired.” *[Goldberg et al., 2007, pp. 114]* Officer Aubrey Davis of the Pentagon police heads to the crash site with Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld immediately after the Pentagon is hit. He receives frantic pleas over his radio, regarding Rumsfeld’s whereabouts. But, as Davis later recalls, “the system was overloaded, everyone on the frequency was talking, everything jumbled, so I couldn’t get through and they went on asking” (see [\(9:38 a.m.-10:00 a.m.\) September 11, 2001](#)). *[Cockburn, 2007, pp. 1-2]* Cellular and landline telephone communications remain “virtually unreliable or inaccessible during the first few hours of the response.” But later on, in the afternoon, Verizon technicians and Secret Service technical staff install portable cellular towers at the Pentagon, and this significantly increases cell phone access. *[US Department of Health and Human Services, 7/2002, pp. C36]* Communications problems are experienced not just around the Pentagon but also in the broader Washington area, with some senior government officials being affected (see [\(After 8:55 a.m.\) September 11, 2001](#)). *[Verton, 2003, pp. 149]*

[Shortly After 9:37 a.m. September 11, 2001: Damaged Pentagon Security Cameras Allegedly Do Not Show Crash Site](#)

Pentagon security cameras facing the crash scene allegedly have been put out of order by the attack. *[Murphy, 2002, pp. 245]* John Jester, the chief of the Defense Protective Service (DPS), runs from his office at the Pentagon down to the DPS Communications Center and orders, “Get a camera up there!” *[Goldberg et al., 2007, pp. 152-153]* As the Washington Times later notes, “The attack occurred close to the Pentagon’s heliport, an area that normally would be under 24-hour security surveillance, including video monitoring.” *[Washington Times, 9/21/2001]* However, some of the Communications Center’s eight wall-mounted monitor screens are blank, because the crash has destroyed the camera nearest the area of impact and cut connectivity to others. Furthermore, some of the security cameras at the Pentagon are currently inoperable because of construction work going on. Officer Jesse De Vaughn brings up an image from a camera at the Navy Annex, located a few hundred yards from the Pentagon, which is then focused onto the crash site. *[Goldberg et al., 2007, pp. 153 and 244]* Two recently installed security cameras located north of the crash site in fact captured the moment the aircraft impacted the Pentagon. *[Goldberg et al., 2007, pp. 161]* The poor quality footage from these will be officially released in 2006 (see [May 16, 2006](#)). Whether the cameras that were destroyed or disconnected when the Pentagon was hit captured the approaching aircraft or the moment of impact is unstated.

[After 9:37 a.m. September 11, 2001: Air Force Crisis Action Team Responds to Attacks](#)



Harry Brososky. *[Source: Syracuse University]* Inside the Air Force Operations Center at the Pentagon, personnel do not feel when the building is hit. The Operations Center is located in the basement of the building’s C Ring, on the opposite side to where the impact occurs. But alarms go off, and television news reports confirm that the Pentagon has been attacked. Secretary of the Air Force James Roche and Air Force Chief of Staff John Jumper arrive at the Operations Center shortly after the attack (see [\(Shortly After 9:37 a.m.\) September 11, 2001](#)). According to Roche, the first thing they do there is “try and find out where our people were to make sure they were safe and safely out of the building.” Then, “The second thing we did was to try and hook up with the North American Air Defense Command, NORAD, and then to stand by and start to think of how we, the Air Force, could support any casualties or any other things that might develop during the day.” Air Force Major Harry Brososky also arrives at the Operations Center shortly after

the Pentagon is hit, to help the Air Force's Crisis Action Team (CAT) there. When he arrives, the CAT is taking calls coming in on numerous phone lines. As Brososky later describes, "We became the eyes and ears of the Air Force." The CAT works with the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) to monitor flight activity over the US. It also coordinates with NORAD to put fighter jets on alert in Alaska and Hawaii. Brososky says that while "We're trained to know what to do in a crisis,... at times we had information overload and had to decide quickly what to do with all the information that was pouring in." Around midday, the decision is made to leave the building, and the CAT relocates to a secret location outside Washington. [[Dover Post, 9/19/2001](#); [CNN, 10/10/2001](#); [Syracuse University Magazine, 12/2001](#); [Airman, 10/2002](#); [Prospectus, 9/2006, pp. 3-6](#)]

[Shortly After 9:37 a.m. September 11, 2001: Park Police Aviation Unit Promptly Responds to Pentagon Attack](#)



A US Park Police helicopter on the road outside the Pentagon. [*Source: Michael Garcia*] The US Park Police Aviation Unit becomes one of the first agencies to respond to the attack on the Pentagon, with its two helicopters arriving on the scene within minutes of the crash. [[Goldberg et al., 2007, pp. 161-162](#)] The aviation unit is located in Anacostia Park in southeast Washington, DC, across the Potomac River from the Pentagon. It has two Bell 412 helicopters—a modern version of the "Huey"—that are prepared for virtually any emergency. They are equipped with mass casualty kits, which allow them to carry up to four critically injured patients, along with a large amount of additional medical and rescue apparatus, and other sophisticated equipment. [[Aviation International News, 10/1/2001](#); [Rotor and Wing, 11/2001](#); [Rotor and Wing, 2/2002](#); [National Park Service, 10/16/2004](#); [USA Today, 10/25/2007](#)] The unit had been running a large training event (see [8:30 a.m. September 11, 2001](#)) when personnel there learned of the first crash in New York from television reports. After seeing the second plane hitting the World Trade Center live, they realized this was a deliberate act. Sergeant Ronald Galey, one of the unit's helicopter pilots, will later recall that at that point, "[W]e just started talking, 'Hey, we'd better get ready.'"

Personnel Hear Explosion from Pentagon - Personnel at the aviation unit hear the explosion when the Pentagon is attacked at 9:37 a.m. Galey and Sergeant Kenneth Burchell, another of the unit's helicopter pilots, hear a loud thud and then look up to see a column of smoke rising from the vicinity of the Pentagon. Galey will recall, "We all knew" this was another terrorist attack. He will add, "[W]e've all been expecting something like this, for an attack of some sort." However, Galey does not initially realize the smoke rising up in the distance is coming from the Pentagon. He will say he only "suspected it was some military installation over there." [[US Naval Historical Center, 11/19/2001](#); [US Naval Historical Center, 11/20/2001](#); [McDonnell, 2004, pp. 19-20](#)]

Controller Reports Crash, but Accounts Conflict - Soon, the "aircraft crash phone" in the aviation unit office rings, setting off a distinctive horn alarm. This phone is a direct communications line from the control tower at Washington's Reagan National Airport, which enables the aviation unit to respond quickly to incidents at the airport. Galey answers the call. [[McDonnell, 2004, pp. 20](#)]; [[Goldberg et al., 2007, pp. 161-162](#)] On the other end of the line is air traffic controller David Walsh (see [9:38 a.m. September 11, 2001](#)). According to author Lynn Spencer, Walsh yells down the phone: "Aircraft down at the Pentagon! Aircraft down at the Pentagon!" [[Federal Aviation Administration, 9/18/2001](#); [Spencer, 2008, pp. 158-159](#)] Galey will give a similar account in a January 2002 interview, recalling that Walsh tells him that "they had a 757 go into the Pentagon and they needed us to respond to the incident." [[National Park Service, 1/17/2002](#)] But in November 2001, Galey will recall that Walsh says, "We have a 757 down somewhere in the vicinity of the 14th Street Bridge"—a bridge over the Potomac River, near the Pentagon. [[Rotor and Wing, 11/2001](#)] Later that month, Galey will state that Walsh says the tower has "lost a 757 somewhere in the vicinity of the Pentagon." [[US Naval Historical Center, 11/20/2001](#)]

Controller Reports Crash at Airport, according to Some Accounts - However, on another occasion Galey will say that Walsh tells him, "[W]e have a 757 down on the north end of the airport." [[National Park Service, 9/21/2002](#)] And Sergeant Keith Bohn, another of the Park Police helicopter pilots, will give a similar account, recalling that in the initial phone call the aviation unit receives about the attack, it is informed that there is "an aircraft down at the end of the runway at National Airport." Bohn will say he only learns the correct location of the crash while he is starting up his helicopter to respond, at which time he talks with someone in the unit's other helicopter, and "they told me, in disbelief, that the aircraft had in fact hit the Pentagon." [[US Naval Historical Center, 11/19/2001](#)]

Helicopters Reach Pentagon Minutes after Attack - The crew of one of the unit's helicopters, which has the call sign "Eagle I," comprises Galey as pilot, rescue technician Sergeant John Marsh, and rescue team officer John Dillon. The crew of the other helicopter, "Eagle II," comprises pilots Burchell and Bohn, aviation unit commander Lieutenant Philip Cholak and assistant commander Sergeant Bernard Stasulli, and two Defense Department medics, Keith Kettell and Jason Kepp. [[US Congress, House, 9/11/2002](#); [National Park Service, 9/21/2002](#); [McDonnell, 2004, pp. 20](#)] Eagle I is the first of the two helicopters to take off and

arrive on the scene of the attack, according to most accounts. [[US Naval Historical Center, 11/19/2001](#); [US Congress, House, 9/11/2002](#); [NBC 4, 9/11/2003](#)] According to National Park Service reports, it is in the air less than two minutes after the aviation unit hears of the attack, and Eagle II follows it a minute later. [[National Park Service, 9/21/2002](#); [National Park Service, 10/22/2002](#)] But according to the Arlington County After-Action Report, Eagle I takes off at “approximately 9:43 a.m.” and Eagle II takes off eight minutes later, at 9:51 a.m. [[US Department of Health and Human Services, 7/2002, pp. A-45](#)] Furthermore, according to Galey, Eagle II is in fact the first of the helicopters to launch, while Eagle I, in which he flies, takes off right after it. [[US Naval Historical Center, 11/20/2001](#)] The two helicopters arrive at the Pentagon within six minutes of the attack there, according to Rotor and Wing magazine. [[Rotor and Wing, 11/2001](#); [Rotor and Wing, 2/2002](#)] They are the first helicopters to arrive at the scene of the crash. [[NBC 4, 9/11/2003](#)]

One Helicopter Lands, Other Circles Overhead - Eagle I remains airborne, circling overhead and assuming command and control of the airspace. Eagle II lands on a paved roadway 150 to 200 yards from the crash site, according to the National Park Service’s account of 9/11, and then some of its crew members grab their emergency medical equipment and run toward the building. After a time, Bohn moves the helicopter closer to the Pentagon. [[US Naval Historical Center, 11/20/2001](#); [McDonnell, 2004, pp. 20-21](#) ] According to Bohn’s recollections, Eagle II initially lands in “the grass area of the cloverleaf” of Route 27 and Columbia Pike. But after “maybe 10 minutes,” Bohn takes off and moves the helicopter to the road by the Pentagon helipad. [[US Naval Historical Center, 11/19/2001](#)]

Helicopter Takes Off with Two Patients - The triage officer at the Pentagon indicates that there are 11 individuals requiring medical evacuation, but eventually only two severely burned patients are carried onto Eagle II. Minutes after landing outside the Pentagon, the helicopter takes off and flies the patients to the Washington Hospital Center. [[USU Medicine, 12/2002](#) ; [McDonnell, 2004, pp. 20, 22](#) ] While most accounts describe Park Police helicopters only taking off in the minutes after the attack on the Pentagon, Navy historian John Darrell Sherwood will later say that at least one of the aviation unit’s helicopters took off before the Pentagon was hit, and it was directed to intercept the aircraft approaching the Pentagon (see [Shortly Before 9:35 a.m. September 11, 2001](#)). And several witnesses will report seeing a helicopter near the Pentagon just before the attack there (see [\(9:35 a.m.-9:36 a.m.\) September 11, 2001](#)). [[US Naval Historical Center, 12/13/2001](#); [Washington Post, 9/5/2002](#); [Goldberg et al., 2007, pp. 258](#)]

[\(9:38 a.m.-10:00 a.m.\) September 11, 2001: Senior Officials Unable to Contact Defense Secretary Rumsfeld](#)



Stephen Cambone. [*Source: US Department of Defense*] Immediately after the Pentagon was hit, Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld left his office and headed to the crash scene (see [9:38 a.m. September 11, 2001](#)). For the 20 minutes or so that he is gone, others are desperately trying to contact him. Among those seeking Rumsfeld are Stephen Cambone, his closest aide, who is currently in the Pentagon’s Executive Support Center (see [Shortly After 9:03 a.m. September 11, 2001](#)), and also the National Military Command Center (see [9:39 a.m. September 11, 2001](#)). Officer Aubrey Davis of the Pentagon police, who is accompanying Rumsfeld, is receiving frantic calls over his radio saying, “Where’s the secretary? Where’s the secretary?” Davis is unable to answer these requests. He later recalls, “I kept saying, ‘We’ve got him,’ but the system was overloaded, everyone on the frequency was talking, everything jumbled, so I couldn’t get through and they went on asking.” A senior White House official, who is in its Situation Room trying to coordinate a response to the attacks, will later angrily condemn Rumsfeld for having been out of touch during such a critical period. He says, “What was Rumsfeld doing on 9/11? He deserted his post. He disappeared. The country was under attack. Where was the guy who controls America’s defense? Out of touch! How long does it take for something bad to happen? No one knew what was happening. What if this had been the opening shot of a coordinated attack by a hostile power? Outrageous, to abandon your responsibilities and go off and do what you don’t need to be doing, grandstanding.” [[Cockburn, 2007, pp. 2-4](#); [C-SPAN, 2/25/2007](#)]

[9:39 a.m.-9:44 a.m. September 11, 2001: Media Reports Pentagon Explosion](#)



The Pentagon on fire. [Source: *Press Association*] Television news reports describe an explosion and fire occurring at the Pentagon, but do not specify that a plane hit it:

■Two seconds after 9:39 a.m., reporter Jim Miklaszewski states on NBC News: “I don’t want to alarm anybody right now, but apparently, there—it felt, just a few moments ago, like there was an explosion of some kind here at the Pentagon. We’re on the E-ring of the Pentagon. We have a window that faces out toward the Potomac, toward Kennedy Center. We haven’t been able to see or—or hear anything after the initial blast. I just stepped out in the hallway. Security guards were herding people out of the building, and I saw just a moment ago as I looked outside, a number of construction workers who have been working here, have taken flight. They’re running as far away from the building as they can right now. I—I hear no sirens going off in the building; I see no smoke, but the building shook for just a couple of seconds. The windows rattled and security personnel are doing what they can momentarily to clear this part of the building. Again, I have no idea whether it was part of the construction work, whether it was an accident or what is going on. We’re going to try to find those details and get them to you as soon as possible. But interestingly enough, one intelligence official here in the building said when he saw what appeared to be the coordinating attack on the World Trade Center, his advice was to stay away from the outside of the building today just in case.” [NBC, 9/11/2001]

■At 9:40, CNN coverage includes a banner stating, “Reports of fire at Pentagon.” [CNN, 9/11/2001] Three minutes later, CNN producer Chris Plant reports from the Pentagon: “It’s impossible for me to say... exactly what caused this. I did not hear an explosion but there is certainly a very, very significant fire in this enormous office building.” [CNN, 9/11/2001]

■At 9:42, ABC News reports smoke coming from somewhere behind the Old Executive Office Building, next to the White House. Two minutes later it reports a “fire confirmed at the Pentagon.” [ABC News, 9/11/2001]

■At 9:43, CBS News reports “smoke pouring out of the Pentagon,” but adds, “We don’t know whether this is the result of a bomb or whether it is yet another aircraft that has targeted a symbol of the United States’ power.” [CBS, 9/11/2001]

However, no media outlets record video footage of the Pentagon crash, and the cause of the explosion remains unknown for some minutes afterward. The Associated Press is apparently the first source to report that a plane hit the Pentagon (see [9:43 a.m.-9:53 a.m. September 11, 2001](#)).

[Between 9:38 a.m. and 10:00 a.m. September 11, 2001: Rumsfeld Spends Brief Time at Pentagon Crash Scene and Helps Carry a Stretcher; Accounts Conflict over Details](#)



Rumsfeld show on a video broadcast on CNN helping carry a stretcher shortly after the Pentagon attack. He is in the center of the picture, wearing a dark jacket. [Source: CNN] Within seconds of the Pentagon being hit, Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld rushed out of his office and headed toward the crash scene (see [9:38 a.m. September 11, 2001](#)). According to Officer Aubrey Davis, who is currently accompanying Rumsfeld as his bodyguard, when they reach the site, “There were the flames, and bits of metal all around. The secretary picked up one of the pieces of metal. I was telling him he shouldn’t be interfering with a crime scene when he looked at some inscription on it and said, ‘American Airlines.’” According to Rumsfeld, a person who’d seen the attack on the Pentagon informs him a plane had flown into it. Rumsfeld later recalls: “I saw people on the grass, and we just, we tried to put them in stretchers and then move them out across the grass towards the road and lifted them over a jersey wall so the people on that side could stick them into the ambulances. I was out there for a while, and then people started gathering, and we were able to get other people to do that, to hold IVs for people. There were people lying on the grass with clothes blown off and burns all over them.” [Parade

[Magazine, 10/12/2001](#); [Cockburn, 2007, pp. 1-2](#)] Versions of this story will appear elsewhere. [[Star-Tribune \(Minneapolis\), 9/12/2001](#); [Larry King Live, 12/5/2001](#); [ABC News, 9/11/2002](#); [Vanity Fair, 5/9/2003](#)] Video footage confirms that Rumsfeld helps carry a stretcher at the crash scene. [[CNN, 8/17/2002](#)] One report will even describe him pulling budget analyst Paul Gonzales to safety from the burning wreckage. [[Daily Telegraph, 9/16/2001](#)] However, Gonzales later offers his own detailed recollections of pulling other people to safety, which fail to involve Rumsfeld in any way. [[Washington Post, 3/11/2002](#)] Assistant Secretary of Defense for Public Affairs Victoria Clarke will say Rumsfeld is gone from the building for “about half an hour.” [[WBZ Radio 1030 \(Boston\), 9/15/2001](#)] A Pentagon spokesperson has Rumsfeld helping at the crash site for “15 minutes or so.” [[Reuters, 9/11/2001](#)] Another account will claim he loads the wounded onto stretchers for 15 minutes. [[Scripps Howard News Service, 9/11/2001](#)] However, considering the time it would have taken to walk to the crash site—each side of the enormous Pentagon is the length of three football fields—journalist Andrew Cockburn later concludes that Rumsfeld could only have been at the crash scene for a brief period. [[Cockburn, 2007, pp. 3](#)] Rumsfeld reportedly heads back into the Pentagon at the urging of a security agent, though in an interview soon after 9/11 he will claim the decision to go back inside was his own, saying, “I decided I should be in [the building] figuring out what to do, because your brain begins to connect things, and there were enough people there to worry about that.” [[Parade Magazine, 10/12/2001](#); [Washington Post, 1/27/2002](#)] He tells the 9/11 Commission, “I was back in the Pentagon with a crisis action team shortly before or after 10:00 a.m.” (see [\(10:00 a.m.-10:30 a.m.\) September 11, 2001](#)). [[9/11 Commission, 3/23/2004](#)] While Rumsfeld is at the crash scene, others are frantically trying to get in touch with him but are unable to do so (see [\(9:38 a.m.-10:00 a.m.\) September 11, 2001](#)).

[9:39 a.m. September 11, 2001: Defense Secretary Rumsfeld Is Wanted at Pentagon Teleconference but Cannot Be Reached](#)



This picture of Rumsfeld (center), taken from the US Army website, is captioned, “Secretary of Defense Donald H. Rumsfeld returns to Pentagon inner offices Tuesday morning after surveying the damage from the hijacked plane which crashed into the building moments before.” This contradicts his claim that he was helping victims for nearly an hour after the attack. However, there is video footage of Rumsfeld helping a person on a stretcher and it is not known when this picture is taken exactly. [[Source: US Army](#)] Captain Charles Leidig, a deputy who is temporarily in charge of the Pentagon’s National Military Command Center (NMCC), is handling the NMCC’s crisis teleconference. He opens the call saying, “An air attack against North America may be in progress.” He mentions reports of a crash into the opposite side of the Pentagon, and requests that Defense Secretary Rumsfeld be added to the conference. [[9/11 Commission, 6/17/2004](#); [9/11 Commission, 6/17/2004](#)] Rumsfeld has a crucial role to play in coordinating the military response to an attack on the US. According to journalist and author Andrew Cockburn, since the Cold War, “In an age when an enemy attack might allow only a few minutes for detection and reaction, control of American military power became vested in the National Command Authority, which consists of the president and the secretary of defense. Collectively, the NCA is the ultimate source of military orders, uniquely empowered, among other things, to order the use of nuclear weapons. In time of war, therefore, Rumsfeld was effectively the president’s partner, the direct link to the fighting forces, and all orders had to go through him. Such orders were supposed to be transmitted from... the National Military Command Center.” Cockburn adds that the NMCC is “the operational center for any and every crisis, from nuclear war to hijacked airliners.” Yet, rather than join the NMCC conference, Rumsfeld has already gone out of the Pentagon to see the crash site, without telling any of his command staff where he was going, and remains out of contact for some time (see [Between 9:38 a.m. and 10:00 a.m. September 11, 2001](#)). Therefore, a few minutes after Leidig makes his request, Rumsfeld’s office will report back that he is nowhere to be found. Cockburn concludes, “The chain of command was broken.” [[Cockburn, 2007, pp. 4-5](#); [Democracy Now!, 3/7/2007](#)] It is unknown whether Rumsfeld has a cell phone or pager on him, and if so, why he cannot be reached.

[9:40 a.m.-9:43 a.m. September 11, 2001: First Responders Arrive at Pentagon within Minutes of Attack](#)



Initial firefighting efforts after the attack on the Pentagon. [Source: *US Department of Defense*] (click image to enlarge) Numerous area firefighters and other emergency workers promptly learn of the Pentagon crash and are able to arrive at the crash scene within 5 or 6 minutes of the attack. These responders include members of the Arlington County Fire Department (ACFD) and the Fort Myer Fire Department, plus units belonging to the Fire and Rescue Department of the Metropolitan Washington Airports Authority (MWAA). [*Goldberg et al., 2007, pp. 66*] ACFD's training officer, Captain Chuck Gibbs, reaches the crash site within 3 minutes of the attack, followed a minute later by Battalion Chief Bob Cornwell, who assumes initial incident command responsibilities. ACFD Captain Edward Blunt arrives at 9:42 and establishes Emergency Medical Services control. ACFD Truck 105 is the first unit to arrive, reaching the scene at 9:41. [*US Department of Health and Human Services, 7/2002, pp. A5-A6 and I-1*] A minute after it, Rescue Engines 161 and 162 of the Fort Myer Fire Department arrive, followed by a reserve pumper, Engine 163. [*Goldberg et al., 2007, pp. 68*] MWAA fire and medical units, and the first contingent of the FBI's National Capital Response Squad, also arrive within 5 minutes of the crash. By 10:00 a.m., most of the ACFD duty shift will be engaged at the Pentagon. [*US Department of Health and Human Services, 7/2002, pp. A7*] Federal, state, and local civilian police officers also arrive within minutes of the attack. [*Goldberg et al., 2007, pp. 161*] Most Arlington County Police Department officers will have reached the scene within 3 hours. [*US Department of Health and Human Services, 7/2002, pp. C6*] Several factors have contributed to the prompt emergency response:

- The Arlington County Emergency Communications Center (ECC), which is the focal point of all police and fire 911 calls for the county, received several calls from emergency workers who saw the low-flying plane approaching the Pentagon (see [\(9:36 a.m.-9:39 a.m.\) September 11, 2001](#)). [*Goldberg et al., 2007, pp. 66*]
- Some fire and rescue units responded after hearing the radio message of Fire Captain Steve McCoy, reporting the crash. [*US Department of Health and Human Services, 7/2002, pp. A4*]
- Numerous emergency units were already on the road near the Pentagon, and were able to quickly respond, after being called out to an apartment fire that was found to have already gone out (see [\(Shortly Before 9:37 a.m.\) September 11, 2001](#)). [*Fire Engineering, 11/2002*]
- And MWAA firefighters were already responding to a car crash at nearby Reagan National Airport, had heard the sound of the crash, and saw the resulting smoke rising into the air (see [\(9:20 a.m.-9:42 a.m.\) September 11, 2001](#)). [*Goldberg et al., 2007, pp. 69-70*]

Soon after 9:37 a.m. September 11, 2001: Pentagon Medical Staff Implement Mass Casualty Plan; Aided by Pre-9/11 Exercises



Medical workers at the first triage area set up outside the Pentagon after it is attacked. [Source: Mark D. Faram / US Navy] Soon after the Pentagon is hit, medical workers initiate their mass casualty plan (MASCAL) for dealing with disasters. Sergeant Matthew Rosenberg, a medic at the Pentagon's DiLorenzo Tricare Health Clinic, arrives at the center courtyard. Seeing smoke rising from the side of the building and patients staggering out, he radios the clinic: "You need to initiate MASCAL right now! We have mass casualties! I need medical assets to the courtyard!" Major Lorie Brown, chief nurse of the DiLorenzo Clinic, says that as soon as she sees people running down the corridor to evacuate, "we initiated the MASCAL, started galvanizing all of our assets and put our plan in action." [[Washington Post, 9/16/2001](#); [Office of Medical History, 9/2004, pp. 7, 39](#)] The Pentagon has actually conducted at least three MASCAL training exercises in the previous 12 months, based around a plane crashing into the place (see [October 24-26, 2000](#)) (see [May 2001](#)) (see [Early August 2001](#)). Lieutenant Colonel John Felicio, the deputy commander for administration of the DiLorenzo Clinic, says, "The saving grace to our efforts was the two MASCAL exercises we previously had conducted.... Our scenario for both MASCALS was a plane flying into the Pentagon courtyard." Furthermore, the nearby Walter Reed Army Medical Center (WRAMC), which sends ambulances in response to the attack, has recently recovered from a four-day power loss (see [August 27-31, 2001](#)). A military report will later state: "Many believe that [this] extended emergency... helped WRAMC in its response on September 11." [[Office of Medical History, 9/2004, pp. 18, 146](#)]

(Shortly After 9:41 a.m.) September 11, 2001: Park Police Helicopter Provides Live Video Feed of Pentagon Crash Scene to FBI and Other Agencies

A US Park Police helicopter that is responding to the attack on the Pentagon and flying above the building transmits a live video feed of the crash scene to the FBI and other agencies, providing them with instant information about the extent of the damage and destruction at the Pentagon. [[US Congress. House, 9/11/2002](#); [National Park Service, 9/21/2002](#)] The helicopter, which has the call sign "Eagle I," is one of two helicopters belonging to the Park Police Aviation Unit that arrived at the Pentagon minutes after the attack there (see [Shortly After 9:37 a.m. September 11, 2001](#)). [[Rotor and Wing, 11/2001](#)] It has microwave "downlink" capability, which enables its crew to fly over a particular location and transmit instantaneous video images to the Park Police chief's command post and other locations.

FBI Requests Video of Crash Scene - Shortly after Eagle I arrives over the Pentagon, the crew receives a request from the FBI to send it information using the downlink on their helicopter's video camera. [[McDonnell, 2004, pp. 22](#)] According to Sergeant Ronald Galey, the pilot of Eagle I, the FBI arrives on the scene "within 10 minutes or 15 minutes" of his helicopter reaching the Pentagon. Galey will later recall: "We heard from them immediately: 'Start your downlink, we want to capture everything that we can.'" [[US Naval Historical Center, 11/20/2001](#)] The downlink capability then enables the crew of Eagle I "to transmit real-time images and information to people who needed them to make decisions," according to the National Park Service's account of 9/11. As well as the FBI, the images are sent to the Secret Service, the Washington, DC, Metropolitan Police, and Park Police headquarters. Eagle I spends "the next four or five hours flying overhead and transmitting video images to the FBI." [[National Park Service, 9/21/2002](#); [McDonnell, 2004, pp. 23](#)]

Fire Department Chief Goes Up in Helicopter - The Park Police's two Bell 412 helicopters are packed with sophisticated equipment. As well as the microwave downlink, they have an infrared heat detection system known as FLIR (forward looking infrared). When the Arlington County Fire Department later has difficulty getting its equipment to the proper locations to fight the fires in the Pentagon, its chief will be taken up in Eagle I and flown low over the building. The infrared imagery will help him locate the fires under the roof so he can better position his firefighting crews and equipment. [[National Park Service, 1/17/2002](#); [Rotor and Wing, 2/2002](#); [McDonnell, 2004, pp. 23-24](#)]

9:42 a.m. September 11, 2001: FBI Arrives at the Pentagon; Assumes Responsibility for Investigation



Logo of the FBI's National Capital Response Squad. [Source: FBI] Within five minutes of the Pentagon being hit, the first group from the FBI's National Capital Response Squad arrives there. Due to this being a terrorist attack, the Pentagon and its grounds are immediately declared a federal crime scene. Under the terms of a 1995 presidential directive, this makes them the exclusive responsibility of the FBI. The FBI immediately begins collecting evidence and is also responsible for recovering bodies. Its agents are able to confiscate security videos from a nearby gas station within minutes of the crash (see [\(After 9:37 a.m.\) September 11, 2001](#)). More than 700 FBI agents, assisted by hundreds of individuals from other organizations, will participate in the recovery operation.

[\[US President, 6/21/1995; Washington Times, 9/12/2001; US Department of Health and Human Services, 7/2002, pp. A-7, A-23, C-1, C-54\]](#)

[9:43 a.m.-9:53 a.m. September 11, 2001: Associated Press First to Report a Plane Hit the Pentagon: CNN Still Unsure What Happened for Ten More Minutes](#)

An Associated Press news alert at 9:43 a.m. states, “An aircraft has crashed into the Pentagon, witnesses say.” [\[Associated Press, 2001\]; Broadcasting and Cable, 8/26/2002\]](#) This is apparently the first news of the crash. Initial television reports stated there had been an explosion at the Pentagon, but not that a plane caused it (see [9:39 a.m.-9:44 a.m. September 11, 2001](#)). Minutes later, there is still uncertainty over what caused the explosion. At 9:49, CNN’s Chris Plant reports from the Pentagon, “[I]nitial reports from witnesses indicate that there was in fact a helicopter circling the building, contrary to what the AP reported, according to the witnesses I’ve spoken to anyway, and that this helicopter disappeared behind the building, and that there was then an explosion” (see [9:35 a.m.-9:36 a.m. September 11, 2001](#)). [\[CNN, 9/11/2001\]](#) It is not until 9:53 that CNN confirms, “it was a plane that crashed into the Pentagon.” [\[CNN, 9/11/2001\]](#)

[\(9:45 a.m.\) September 11, 2001: Langley Pilot Instructed to Identify Unknown Aircraft and Survey Pentagon: Doesn’t Realize a Plane Hit It](#)

An F-16 launched from Langley Air Force Base is directed toward two unidentified aircraft and then asked to inspect and report on the damage to the Pentagon. Major Dean Eckmann, one of the three F-16 pilots who took off from Langley at 9:30 (see [9:25 a.m.-9:30 a.m. September 11, 2001](#)), is reportedly flying in the Washington area. He will later recall, “I set up a combat air patrol with air traffic controllers,” and then, at around 9:45, “they come back to me and say there are a couple [of] unknowns heading north on the Potomac River toward the White House.” He is flying above 20,000 feet but heads straight down and reaches his target in “no time,” he says. The unknowns turn out to be a military helicopter and a law enforcement helicopter apparently heading towards the Pentagon to assist there. Eckmann flies over the Capitol and Mall area, he recalls, “to clear the area and make sure nothing else was coming in.”

Instructions to Inspect the Pentagon - Then Captain Craig Borgstrom, one of the other two Langley pilots, calls him and says that NORAD’s Northeast Air Defense Sector (NEADS) wants to know the extent of the damage at the Pentagon. Eckmann flies over it and reports that the two outer rings have been damaged. NEADS wants to know if he can tell what has happened. He guesses it was “a big fuel tanker truck because of the amount of smoke and flames coming up and nobody indicated anything about an airplane. And there was no airplane wreckage off to the side.” [\[Filson, 2003, pp. 66\]](#) But he will give a different account to the 9/11 Commission, telling it: “I reverted to the Russian threat.... I’m thinking cruise missile threat from the sea. You know you look down and see the Pentagon burning and I thought the bastards snuck one by us.... [N]o one told us anything.” According to the Commission, the Langley pilots have not been briefed about why they were scrambled. [\[9/11 Commission, 7/24/2004, pp. 45 and 465\]](#) Eckmann will in fact say, “[W]e didn’t actually find out it was an airliner [that hit the Pentagon] until the next day.” [\[Associated Press, 8/19/2002\]](#)

Conflicting Times - Eckmann’s F-16 is presumably the first fighter to arrive over the Pentagon following the attack there. When precisely this occurs is unclear (see [\(Between 9:49 a.m. and 11:00 a.m.\) September 11, 2001](#)). However, according to numerous witnesses on the ground, the first fighter does not fly over the Pentagon until significantly later than Eckmann describes, at around 10:40 a.m. (see [\(10:40 a.m.\) September 11, 2001](#)). [\[Creed and Newman, 2008, pp. 130-131\]](#) And according to some accounts, this is not Eckmann’s plane, but an F-16 from Andrews Air Force Base, piloted by Major Billy Hutchison. [\[Filson, 2003, pp. 81-82; Spencer, 2008, pp. 235-236\]](#)

[\(9:45 a.m.-10:45 a.m.\) September 11, 2001: Secondary Explosions Heard inside Pentagon](#)



Chris Braman. [Source: *California State University, Fullerton*] A number of witnesses hear secondary explosions inside the Pentagon in the immediate aftermath of the attack there. [[Associated Press, 9/11/2001](#); [Washington Post, 9/11/2001](#)] Some possible explanations are later suggested for these explosions, though their exact causes are unclear.

■ Captain William Toti, the special assistant to the vice chief of naval operations, hears and feels numerous explosions while he assists in the rescue efforts at the crash site. [[Proceedings, 9/2002](#); [Washington Post, 11/17/2006](#); [McKinney Courier-Gazette, 9/12/2008](#)] A month later, Toti will recall, "One of the things I haven't seen reported in any of the papers was that periodically, for about the next hour [after he arrives at the crash site], there were secondary explosions going off in the hole in the Pentagon." While he is standing about 30 yards from the point of impact, Toti hears "pop... pop, pop... pop, pop, pop... pop." He will say these explosions are "loud. Scary, absolutely scary. The make-you-jump kind of explosions." [[US Naval Historical Center, 10/10/2001](#)] Toti and two Army officers that assist him with the rescue efforts fear the explosions, which come from "the fissure" in the building, "are bombs." [[Washington Post, 11/17/2006](#)] But, Toti will recall, about an hour after he arrives at the crash site, he is "standing with some FBI guys and we were musing as to what the source of the explosions was, and we concluded that they were the oxygen canisters from the airplane. You know, the things [that] produce oxygen for the passengers in an emergency." Toti will say this possible explanation is the "best thing we could think of." [[US Naval Historical Center, 10/10/2001](#)]

■ Army Lieutenant Colonel Ted Anderson and Army Staff Sergeant Chris Braman go into the Pentagon near the crash site to rescue injured victims. They are reportedly "stunned by secondary explosions." One of these is a "fire department car exploding," according to Anderson. The causes of the other explosions are unclear. [[Newsweek, 9/28/2001](#); [Washington Post, 9/8/2002](#)]

■ Lieutenant Commander David Tarantino, a Navy flight surgeon, and Navy Captain David Thomas go into the Pentagon to search for survivors. [[Goldberg et al., 2007, pp. 54-55](#)] They feel "secondary explosions and wondered whether the whole building would cave in or if they were under more attacks," according to The Washingtonian. [[Washingtonian, 12/2001](#)] Tarantino will later recall that there are "secondary explosions going on." [[US Naval Historical Center, 9/25/2001](#)]

■ Colonel Jonathan Fruendt, an Army physician, is heading toward the Pentagon's center courtyard shortly after the crash when he hears an explosion. "I heard another loud boom," he will later recall. As soon as the explosion occurs, people in the corridor with Fruendt "instantly froze in position, and then they turned around and started running back, away from the exit." Fruendt will later comment: "No one has really explained to me exactly what that noise was. Some people said, later, maybe it was some fuel or one of these vehicles, something around the original crash site that blew up.... Other people said it was a sonic boom from the fighters that were flying over the Pentagon." But, he will add, "No one has ever confirmed [the cause of the explosion] with me." [[Office of Medical History, 9/2004, pp. 73-74](#)]

■ Some witnesses say the crash at the Pentagon is "followed by an explosion about 15 minutes later that could be heard miles away," according to the New York Times. This is "apparently the sound of a large portion of the Pentagon collapsing," the Times will report. [[New York Times, 9/12/2001](#)] However, that section of the Pentagon collapses at 10:15 a.m., more than 35 minutes after the crash (see [10:15 a.m. September 11, 2001](#)). [[Goldberg et al., 2007, pp. 19](#)]

(Between 09:45 a.m. and 10:15 a.m.) September 11, 2001: Construction Trailer Is Source of Smoke, Small Explosions

According to a fireman's account, firefighting efforts at the Pentagon are hampered by smoke and small explosions coming out of a construction trailer near the impact site. On the morning of 9/11, Russell "Rusty" Dodge, Jr., an assistant chief with the Fort Belvoir Fire Department, is at Fort Meyer, about a mile from the Pentagon, for a training exercise (see [Before 9:37 a.m. September 11, 2001](#)). He is one of the first to arrive on the scene. He tries to put out the fires, but a construction trailer is a serious obstacle. He will later recall, "[T]hat trailer was the main producer of smoke on the outside of the building...." The trailer "was producing some severe fires and subsequent mini explosions due to highly flammable chemicals in it.... Luckily the chemical containers were caged. Otherwise the fires would have been worse." [[MDW News Service, 10/4/2001](#)]

9:46 a.m. September 11, 2001: NMCC Teleconference Still Looking to Include Defense Heads Rumsfeld and Myers

Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld's office, and acting Joint Chiefs of Staff Chairman Richard Myers' office, report to the NMCC teleconference that they are still trying to track down Rumsfeld and Myers, respectively, and bring them into the conference. [[9/11 Commission, 6/17/2004](#)] Rumsfeld is apparently outside the Pentagon looking at the Flight 77 crash site (see [Between 9:38 a.m. and 10:00 a.m. September 11, 2001](#)), though counterterrorism "tsar" Richard Clarke suggests Rumsfeld is elsewhere in the Pentagon for much of the time (see [\(Between 9:38 a.m. and 9:45 a.m.\) September 11, 2001](#)). Myers' whereabouts in the period after the Pentagon crash have not been fully explained (see [\(Between 9:55 a.m. and 10:25 a.m.\) September 11, 2001](#)). Rumsfeld and Myers do not enter the NMCC until about 10:30 a.m. (see [\(10:30 a.m.\) September 11, 2001](#)).

(Between 9:49 a.m. and 11:00 a.m.) September 11, 2001: Langley Fighters Finally Reach Washington; Accounts of Timing Are Contradictory



A fighter and helicopter both fly directly above the Pentagon on 9/11 on the morning of 9/11. Exact time is unknown. [Source: *Agence France-Presse*] The three F-16s scrambled from Langley Air Force Base, Virginia, at 9:30 a.m. finally reach Washington and the burning Pentagon. The 129 mile distance could theoretically have been covered by the fighters in six minutes, but they've taken a wide detour over the ocean (see [9:30 a.m.-9:37 a.m. September 11, 2001](#)). The exact time they arrive is unclear. An early timeline laid out to CNN by senior Defense Department officials will claim they arrive as early as 9:49 a.m., but the 9/11 Commission later claims they only establish "a combat air patrol (CAP) over Washington" at "approximately 10:00 a.m." [CBS News, 9/14/2001; [CNN, 9/17/2001](#); [North American Aerospace Defense Command, 9/18/2001](#); [9/11 Commission, 8/26/2004, pp. 34](#)]

Conflicting Press Accounts - Press accounts of when the first fighters reach Washington are highly contradictory. Early news accounts describe fighters arriving from Andrews Air Force Base, not Langley, "within minutes," "a few moments," or "just moments" after the Pentagon crash. [Denver Post, 9/11/2001; [Daily Telegraph, 9/16/2001](#); ABC News, 9/11/2002] Other newspaper accounts inaccurately deny that fighters from Andrews are deployed [[USA Today, 9/16/2001](#)], and some deny Andrews even has fighters available. [[USA Today, 9/16/2001](#)] Defense officials will initially claim, "There were no military planes in the skies over Washington until 15 to 20 minutes after the Pentagon was hit"—in other words, 9:53 a.m. to 9:58 a.m. [[Seattle Post-Intelligencer, 9/14/2001](#)] But an ABC News report will suggest that by around 10:00 a.m., "Dozens of fighters are buzzing in the sky" over Washington. [ABC News, 9/11/2002]

Fighter Jets Don't Arrive until Later? - In contrast, the New York Times reports: "In the White House Situation Room and at the Pentagon, the response seemed agonizingly slow. One military official recalls hearing words to the effect of, 'Where are the planes?'" The Pentagon will insist it had air cover over its own building by 10 a.m. However, numerous witnesses on the ground, including a reporter for the New York Times who is headed toward the building, will say they did not see any fighters until around 10:40 a.m., or "closer to 11" (see [10:40 a.m. September 11, 2001](#)). [[New York Times, 9/16/2001](#); [Creed and Newman, 2008, pp. 130-131](#)] According to some accounts, the plane that flies over the Pentagon at that time is Major Billy Hutchison's F-16, launched from Andrews Air Force Base. [[Filson, 2003, pp. 81-82](#); [Spencer, 2008, pp. 235-236](#)] NORAD will initially claim the Langley fighters were about 105 miles from the Pentagon when it was hit at 9:37, and the 9/11 Commission will later claim they were 150 miles away (see [9:37 a.m. September 11, 2001](#)). [[North American Aerospace Defense Command, 9/18/2001](#); [9/11 Commission, 7/24/2004, pp. 27](#)]

(Between 9:55 a.m. and 10:25 a.m.) September 11, 2001: Acting Joint Chiefs Chairman Myers Finally Enters NMCC; Prior Whereabouts Disputed

Acting Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Richard Myers enters the National Military Command Center (NMCC) within the Pentagon, though exactly when this happens remains unclear. According to his own statements, he was on Capitol Hill, in the offices of Senator Max Cleland (D-GA), from just before 9:00 a.m. until around the time the Pentagon was hit. He'd then headed back to the Pentagon (see [Shortly Before 9:00 a.m. September 11, 2001](#) and [Shortly After 9:37 a.m. September 11, 2001](#)). [[Armed Forces Radio And Television Service, 10/17/2001](#); [MSNBC, 9/11/2002](#); [Council on Foreign Relations, 6/29/2006](#)] According to the 9/11 Commission, Myers joins the air threat conference call from the NMCC at "shortly before 10:00." [[9/11 Commission, 7/24/2004, pp. 38](#)] But the American Forces Press Service reports that he arrives at the NMCC "about 15 minutes" before Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld (who arrives around 10:30), meaning at about 10:15 a.m. [[American Forces Press Service, 9/8/2006](#)] Rumsfeld claims that, as he enters the NMCC, Myers has "just returned from Capitol Hill." [[9/11 Commission, 3/23/2004](#)] Cleland verifies that Myers was with him on Capitol Hill until around the time of the Pentagon attack. [[CNN, 11/20/2001](#); [Atlanta Journal-Constitution, 6/16/2003](#)] But counterterrorism "tsar" Richard Clarke claims that Myers has been taking part in a video conference since shortly after the second attack on the WTC, and has been visible on the Pentagon screen (see [9:10 a.m. September 11, 2001](#) and [9:28 a.m. September 11, 2001](#)), thereby implying Myers has been at the Pentagon all along. [[Clarke, 2004, pp. 3 and 5](#)] Myers tells the 9/11 Commission, "After I reached the National Military Command Center (NMCC), I asked questions to determine where Secretary Rumsfeld was, how the FAA was handling airborne flights, and the status of fighters prepared to intercept any hijacked aircraft inbound to Washington." [[9/11 Commission, 6/17/2004](#)]

(Shortly After 9:55 a.m.) September 11, 2001: Park Police Helicopter Given Air Traffic Control Responsibility for Washington Airspace



A US Park Police helicopter flying above the burning Pentagon. [Source: Mark D. Faram / US Navy] A US Park Police helicopter that recently arrived over the Pentagon is contacted by an air traffic controller at Washington's Reagan National Airport and given responsibility for controlling the airspace over Washington, DC, since the control tower at Reagan Airport is being evacuated. [[US Naval Historical Center, 11/20/2001](#); [US Department of Health and Human Services, 7/2002, pp. A-48](#); [McDonnell, 2004, pp. 21](#)] The Park Police Aviation Unit's two helicopters arrived at the Pentagon within minutes of the attack there (see [Shortly After 9:37 a.m. September 11, 2001](#)). [[Rotor and Wing, 11/2001](#)] While one of the helicopters landed to conduct medical evacuations, the other, which has the call sign "Eagle I," circled overhead. [[US Naval Historical Center, 11/20/2001](#); [McDonnell, 2004, pp. 20-21](#)] [Airport Tower Being Evacuated](#) - Eagle I has made three or four orbits around the Pentagon when a controller in the Reagan Airport tower radios its pilot, Sergeant Ronald Galey. The controller says the tower is currently evacuating. [[US Naval Historical Center, 11/20/2001](#); [National Park Service, 1/17/2002](#)] According to some accounts, the tower is being evacuated due to reports of more hijacked aircraft heading in its direction (see [\(9:55 a.m.\) September 11, 2001](#)). [[NBC 4, 9/11/2003](#); [Spencer, 2008, pp. 215-216](#)] But according to other accounts, the controller tells Galey the tower is evacuating because it is being affected by smoke that is drifting across from the burning Pentagon. [[US Department of Health and Human Services, 7/2002, pp. A-48](#); [McDonnell, 2004, pp. 21](#); [Goldberg et al., 2007, pp. 162](#)] Galey will recall the controller saying: "Eagle I, we can't see anything outside the tower. [The smoke is] getting in our ventilation system. We're abandoning the tower." Therefore, the controller gives Galey control of the airspace for the entire Washington area, telling him, "You've got the airspace." [[US Naval Historical Center, 11/20/2001](#); [McDonnell, 2004, pp. 21](#)]

[Pilot Alarmed at Being Given Control of Airspace](#) - The control tower at Reagan Airport is "normally the 'nerve center' for directing any response to this type of incident," according to a National Park Service news article. [[National Park Service, 9/21/2002](#)] Galey is initially alarmed. He will recall thinking, "Exactly what I need right now is I've got control of the airspace." [[US Naval Historical Center, 11/20/2001](#)] However, he is unaware that the FAA has ordered that all airborne aircraft must land at the nearest airport (see [\(9:45 a.m.\) September 11, 2001](#)), which will make his task easier. [[US Congress, House, Committee On Transportation And Infrastructure, 9/21/2001](#); [McDonnell, 2004, pp. 21](#); [9/11 Commission, 7/24/2004, pp. 29](#)]

[NORAD Advises Pilot on Controlling Airspace](#) - The controller gives Galey the radio frequency for NORAD, and tells him to contact NORAD. [[National Park Service, 1/17/2002](#); [McDonnell, 2004, pp. 21-22](#)] The person Galey then talks to at NORAD informs him: "Look, you have no [air] traffic in DC, except for the traffic that you're calling. The aircraft that you're calling in, we're going to allow to come in. Other than that, there should be no one besides the military, and we'll call you out the military traffic." Galey will later reflect: "So that helped tremendously. That function alone was not very taxing." [[US Naval Historical Center, 11/20/2001](#)] The person at NORAD also tells Galey there is "an unauthorized aircraft inbound from the Pennsylvania area, with the estimated time of arrival approximately 20 minutes into DC." Galey will recall that he and the rest of his crew discuss what they should do, and decide that "we'd take our chances and stay there [at the Pentagon], and do what we came there to do." [[National Park Service, 1/17/2002](#)]

[Airspace Control Passed on to Metropolitan Police Helicopter](#) - Eagle I becomes "the air traffic control function for the area, flying a slow racetrack pattern over the site and clearing aircraft in and out," according to Lieutenant Philip Cholak, the Park Police Aviation Unit commander. [[Aviation International News, 10/1/2001](#)] But after a time Galey asks his paramedic to request that a Metropolitan Police helicopter be launched to take over the command and control of the Washington airspace. He tells the paramedic: "You know we're going to have to do a medevac mission here. We're going to have to relinquish the command/control function to somebody else." A Metropolitan Police helicopter subsequently arrives and relieves Eagle I of its command and control function. [[US Naval Historical Center, 11/20/2001](#); [McDonnell, 2004, pp. 22](#)]

[\(10:00 a.m.\) September 11, 2001: Maryland Police Say They Cannot Send Helicopters to Pentagon, but Other Units Provide Helicopters](#)



A Maryland State Police helicopter. [Source: *Maryland State Police*] Sergeant Ronald Galey, the pilot of a US Park Police helicopter responding to the attack on the Pentagon, asks the Maryland State Police to send medical evacuation (medevac) helicopters to help out at the crash scene, but is told, “No, we can’t respond,” apparently because the airspace has been shut down. [*Rotor and Wing*, 11/2001; *US Naval Historical Center*, 11/20/2001] Galey is flying one of the two Park Police Aviation Unit helicopters that arrived at the Pentagon within minutes of the attack there (see [Shortly After 9:37 a.m. September 11, 2001](#)). His helicopter has been circling overhead while the other Park Police helicopter landed to conduct medical evacuations. They are currently the only helicopters to have arrived on the scene.

Pilot Wants More Helicopters to Assist at the Pentagon - Realizing that his helicopter cannot provide its current command and control function and conduct medical evacuations at the same time, Galey requests assistance from other departments that have helicopters equipped to transport injured patients. The first department he calls is the Maryland State Police. [*US Naval Historical Center*, 11/20/2001; *McDonnell*, 2004, pp. 20-22] The Maryland State Police Aviation Command owns 12 helicopters and most of its work involves medical transport, with its helicopters carrying injured patients to hospital. [*Maryland State Police*, 2/16/2003; *Baltimore Sun*, 3/7/2006] According to Galey, the unit has “the most resources for aircraft, medevac aircraft, that we knew were manned and ready to go.” However, Galey will later recall, in response to his request, “they came back and said, ‘No, we can’t respond.’”

Maryland Police Think They Cannot Launch Helicopters - When Galey is told that the unit cannot respond, he and the rest of his crew are “very shocked,” and, Galey will say, “[T]hat’s when we were starting to suspect there was something more to it.” According to later accounts, the unit cannot respond because the airspace has been shut down. [*Rotor and Wing*, 11/2001; *US Naval Historical Center*, 11/20/2001] (The FAA has issued a nationwide “ground stop” that prevents any aircraft from taking off (see [\(9:26 a.m.\) September 11, 2001](#)) and has also ordered 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. 25, 29] Galey is currently unaware that the airspace has been shut down. However, the Maryland State Police helicopters should be able to respond all the same, because NORAD has told him, “The aircraft that you’re calling in, we’re going to allow to come in” (see [\(Shortly After 9:55 a.m.\) September 11, 2001](#)). According to Galey, the Maryland State Police “just didn’t know [that] if we requested them they could come.”

Other Departments Send Helicopters - Galey then contacts MedStar at the Washington Hospital Center and AirCare at Inova Fairfax Hospital in Virginia. Each of them dispatches helicopters to the Pentagon. Galey will recall that these two departments “hadn’t gotten the word that the airspace was shut down, and since I’m the one who requested the aircraft and informed NORAD, NORAD allowed them to come in.” [*Rotor and Wing*, 11/2001; *US Naval Historical Center*, 11/20/2001] It is unclear exactly when Galey contacts the different departments. But according to the Arlington County After-Action Report, the helicopter that MedStar launches arrives at the Pentagon at around 10:18 a.m. Inova Fairfax Hospital launches one helicopter at “approximately 10:00 a.m.” and then sends a second helicopter to the Pentagon at around 10:40 a.m. [*US Department of Health and Human Services*, 7/2002, pp. A-45]

[\(10:00 a.m.-10:30 a.m.\) September 11, 2001: Defense Secretary Rumsfeld Returns to the Pentagon; Speaks to President Bush and Temporarily Joins White House Teleconference](#)

Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld returns from the Pentagon crash site “by shortly before or after 10:00 a.m.” Then he has “one or more calls in my office, one of which was with the president,” according to his testimony before the 9/11 Commission. [*9/11 Commission*, 3/23/2004] The commission later concludes that Rumsfeld’s call with President Bush has little impact: “No one can recall any content beyond a general request to alert forces.” The possibility of shooting down hijacked planes is not mentioned. [*9/11 Commission*, 6/17/2004] Rumsfeld then goes to the Executive Support Center (ESC) located near his office, arriving there at around 10:15 a.m. In the ESC already are Stephen Cambone, Rumsfeld’s closest aide, Larry Di Rita, Rumsfeld’s personal chief of staff, and Victoria Clarke, the assistant secretary of defense for public affairs. Rumsfeld had instructed Di Rita and Clarke to go to the ESC and wait for him there when they’d come to his office soon after the second WTC tower was hit at 9:03 A.M. (see [\(Shortly After 9:03 a.m.\) September 11, 2001](#)). Presently, Rumsfeld gives them their first confirmation that a plane hit the Pentagon, saying, “I’m quite sure it was a plane and I’m pretty sure it’s a large plane.” According to Clarke, he pulls out a yellow legal pad and writes down three categories, “by which his thinking would be organized the rest of the day: what we needed to do immediately, what would have to be underway quickly, and what the military response would be.” [*Clarke*, 2006, pp. 221-222; *Cockburn*, 2007, pp. 5-6] The Executive Support Center has secure video facilities, and while there, Rumsfeld participates in the White House video teleconference. This is the video conference that counterterrorism “tsar” Richard Clarke claims Rumsfeld is a part of much of the morning (see [\(9:10 a.m.\)](#)

[September 11, 2001](#)). Then at around 10:30 a.m., he moves on to the National Military Command Center NMCC, located next door to the ESC (see [10:30 a.m. September 11, 2001](#)). [*Washington Times*, 2/23/2004; *9/11 Commission*, 6/17/2004; *9/11 Commission*, 7/24/2004, pp. 43-44] Those in the NMCC are apparently unaware of Rumsfeld's whereabouts during the half-hour from 10 a.m. to 10:30 a.m.: Brigadier General Montague Winfield later recalls, "For 30 minutes we couldn't find him. And just as we began to worry, he walked into the door of the [NMCC]." [*ABC News*, 9/11/2002]

(After 10:00 a.m.) September 11, 2001: Some Aircraft Debris Visible Inside Pentagon



John McWethy. [Source: Steve Fenn / ABC] ABC News correspondent John McWethy was at the Pentagon at the time it was hit. [*Newsweek*, 9/24/2001] At some later time, an army general he knows offers to take him in closer to the crash site. McWethy recalls: "I got in very close, got a look early on at the bad stuff. I could not, however, see any plane wreckage—it was well inside and had been, basically, vaporized." [*Gilbert et al.*, 2002, pp. 187] The following day, Arlington County Fire Chief Ed Plaughter will similarly tell reporters: "[T]here are some small pieces of aircraft visible from the interior during this firefighting operation... but not large sections. In other words, there's no fuselage sections and that sort of thing." [*US Department of Defense*, 9/12/2001] According to the Defense Department's book about the Pentagon attack: "The front part of the relatively weak fuselage [of Flight 77] disintegrated, but the mid-section and tail-end continued moving for another fraction of a second.... The chain of destruction resulted in parts of the plane ending up inside the Pentagon in reverse of the order they had entered it, with the tail-end of the airliner penetrating the greatest distance into the building." [*Goldberg et al.*, 2007, pp. 17] Navy Lt. Kevin Shaeffer reportedly sees a "chunk of the 757's nose cone and front landing gear" in the service road between the Pentagon's B and C Rings. [*Virginian-Pilot*, 9/9/2002] Other witnesses say they see a large airplane tire. [*Office of Medical History*, 9/2004, pp. 117-118; *Goldberg et al.*, 2007, pp. 54] Army Staff Sgt. Mark Williams, whose search and rescue team enters the Pentagon less than four hours after the attack, recalls seeing "the scorched bodies of several airline passengers... still strapped into their seats" inside the building. [*USA Today*, 9/13/2001]

(10:15 a.m.-10:38 a.m.) September 11, 2001: Emergency Responders at Pentagon Evacuated Due to Supposed Approaching Hijacked Aircraft



With reports of another airplane headed toward Washington, fire and rescue workers were directed to temporarily move away from the Pentagon. [Source: Jon Culberson] At around 10:15 a.m., fire and rescue workers at the Pentagon in response to the attack there are evacuated away from the site, due to a warning of another hijacked aircraft flying towards Washington, DC, currently 20 minutes away. The warning is passed on by Special Agent Chris Combs, the FBI's representative at the Pentagon crash site. Assistant Fire Chief James Schwartz then orders the fire and rescue personnel to evacuate to a highway overpass several hundred yards from the Pentagon. Combs receives the information about the inbound aircraft from the FBI's Washington Field Office, which is in direct contact with the FAA. He then confirms it with the control tower at Washington's Reagan National Airport. According to a report put out by the government of Arlington County, Virginia, updates are announced of the approaching aircraft "until the last warning when [it] went below radar coverage in Pennsylvania, an estimated 4 minutes flying time from the Pentagon." [*US Department of Health*

[and Human Services, 7/2002, pp. A16 and A30; 9/11 Commission, 7/24/2004, pp. 315](#)] Yet if the timing of this account is correct, the approaching plane could not have been Flight 93, which crashed in Pennsylvania considerably earlier (see [\(10:03 a.m.-10:10 a.m.\) September 11, 2001](#)). Finally, Combs is informed by Jim Rice, his boss at the Washington Field Office, “You’re all clear.” Rice adds, incorrectly, “The plane hit Camp David.” [\[Creed and Newman, 2008, pp. 131\]](#) At 10:38, firefighters and rescue workers are allowed to return to the Pentagon and resume their activities. [\[Fire Engineering, 11/2002\]](#) There will be two more evacuations of the Pentagon site in the following 24 hours, also due to false alarms over reports of unidentified inbound aircraft (see [\(2:00 p.m.\) September 11, 2001](#) and [\(10:00 a.m.\) September 12, 2001](#)).

10:15 a.m. September 11, 2001: Pentagon Section Collapses



The wall where the Pentagon was hit before and after its collapsed at 10:15. [\[Source: Jason Ingersoll, public domain\]](#) (click image to enlarge) The front section of the Pentagon that had been hit by Flight 77 collapses. [\[CNN, 9/12/2001; New York Times, 9/12/2001\]](#) A few minutes prior to its collapse, firefighters saw warning signs and sounded a general evacuation tone. No firefighters were injured. [\[NFPA Journal, 11/1/2001\]](#)

(After 10:15 a.m.) September 11, 2001: Police See People, Including Military Personnel, Stealing Debris from Pentagon Crash Site

Two Pentagon police officers see people—some of them members of the military—stealing crash debris from in front of the Pentagon. After the Pentagon was hit, Lt. Robbie Turner had been helping the injured at a triage area. When, at around 10:15 a.m., reports are received of a possible second plane heading for the Pentagon (see [\(10:15 a.m.-10:38 a.m.\) September 11, 2001](#)), he sets about evacuating people away from there. As this is going on, he later recalls: “[W]e had to try to collect up evidence, as much of the evidence as we possibly could. Take pictures of it or whatever.” However, some people are apparently trying to steal plane debris from the road in front of the Pentagon. According to Turner, “[W]e had to try to stop other people from pilfering the wreckage because, believe it or not, there were people—military personnel involved—you know, included, rather, that was picking up the wreckage of the plane from off the highway as we were running away.” [\[Library of Congress, 12/3/2001\]](#) Later on in the day, around 3:00 p.m., another Pentagon police officer, Roosevelt Roberts Jr., is called to the heliport near where the Pentagon was hit, and remains there for the next 13 hours. He will recall that, during this time, “we had a lot of people vandalizing, stealing evidence.” He does not specify who these people are, or what this “evidence” is that is being stolen and vandalized. [\[Library of Congress, 11/30/2001\]](#)

10:17 a.m. September 11, 2001: FAA Representative Finally Joins NMCC Teleconference after Long Delay

A representative of the FAA finally joins an emergency teleconference being conducted by the National Military Command Center (NMCC) at the Pentagon, after NMCC personnel have repeatedly been unable to connect the FAA to the conference. In response to the terrorist attacks, the NMCC began a “significant event conference” at 9:29 a.m., to gather and disseminate information from government agencies (see [9:29 a.m.-9:34 a.m. September 11, 2001](#)), and eight minutes later upgraded this to an “air threat conference” (see [9:37 a.m.-9:39 a.m. September 11, 2001](#)). However, according to the 9/11 Commission Report, because of “equipment problems and difficulty finding secure phone numbers,” operators at the NMCC have been unable to connect the FAA to the conference (see [\(9:29 a.m.-12:00 p.m.\) September 11, 2001](#)). [\[9/11 Commission, 7/21/2003\]](#) [\[9/11 Commission, 7/24/2004, pp. 37\]](#) **FAA Representative Has 'No Situational Awareness'** - The air threat conference is now joined by FAA employee Rayford Brooks. [\[9/11 Commission, 7/24/2004, pp. 463\]](#) Brooks is on duty in the Central Altitude Reservation Function (CARF) at the FAA’s Command Center in Herndon, Virginia. This office is responsible for processing and separating altitude reservations, and coordinates military requests for priority airspace activity with FAA facilities and international agencies. [\[9/11 Commission, 4/5/2004; 9/11 Commission, 4/15/2004\]](#) However, Brooks has “no familiarity with or responsibility for hijackings, no access to decisionmakers, and none of the information available to senior FAA officials,” according to the 9/11 Commission Report. [\[9/11 Commission, 7/24/2004, pp. 37\]](#) Brooks will later recall having had “no situational awareness” of the current crisis. He only arrived at the Command Center at around 9:30 a.m. and had not been listening to the radio while driving to work. Those on the Command Center floor have not given him any instructions regarding the NMCC conference or other operational matters.

Brooks on Conference instead of Military Cell Officer - Brooks will tell the 9/11 Commission that the Air Traffic Services Cell (ATSC)—a small office located next to the CARF at the Command Center, manned by military reservists (see [\(Between 9:04 a.m. and 9:25 a.m.\) September 11, 2001](#))—has asked the CARF to monitor the NMCC’s air threat conference on its behalf for three or four

hours, because the ATSC does not have a working STU-III secure phone. [[9/11 Commission, 4/15/2004](#)] (A chronology of the ATSC's actions on this day will state that the keys for the ATSC's secure phones are recalibrated at some point, and these phones then "worked fine." [[US Air Force, 9/11/2001](#)])

NORAD and FAA Leaders out of Contact - Three times before 10:03 a.m., when the last hijacked plane reportedly crashed (see [\(10:03 a.m.-10:10 a.m.\) September 11, 2001](#)), NORAD asked for confirmation of the FAA's presence on the NMCC's conference, so the FAA could provide an update on the hijackings, but the FAA had not been connected at those times. As a result of the FAA's absence from the conference, the leaders of NORAD and the FAA have effectively been out of contact with each other. [[9/11 Commission, 6/17/2004](#); [9/11 Commission, 7/24/2004, pp. 37-38](#)]

FAA's Absence Caused Confusion over Identities of Hijacked Planes - General Richard Myers, the acting chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, will later write that the lack of communication between the NMCC and the FAA has contributed to confusion at the NMCC over the flight numbers of the aircraft that were hijacked. However, according to Myers, the NMCC could not contact the FAA over ordinary phone lines because "[t]errorists who could hijack aircraft so readily could probably also eavesdrop on unsecured phone lines." [[Myers, 2009, pp. 153](#)]

[\(10:30 a.m.\) September 11, 2001: Pentagon Command Center Director Finally Takes Over from Stand-In](#)

Brigadier General Montague Winfield finally returns to his post as the deputy director for operations (DDO) in the National Military Command Center (NMCC) at the Pentagon, after leaving a colleague, who only recently qualified to take over the position, to stand in for him throughout the terrorist attacks. [[9/11 Commission, 4/29/2004](#) ; [9/11 Commission, 6/17/2004](#)] At 8:30 a.m. Winfield left his post to attend a pre-scheduled meeting that was unrelated to the morning's attacks and had been convened by the Air Force. Since that time, Captain Charles Leidig has replaced him as the DDO (see [8:30 a.m. September 11, 2001](#)). Leidig, the deputy for Command Center operations, only qualified to stand in as the DDO in the NMCC about a month ago. Even though officers in the NMCC realized the US was under terrorist attack when the second plane hit the World Trade Center at 9:03 a.m., Winfield did not return to his post at that time (see [\(Shortly After 9:03 a.m.\) September 11, 2001](#)). [[9/11 Commission, 7/21/2003](#) ; [9/11 Commission, 4/29/2004](#) ; [9/11 Commission, 6/17/2004](#) 

Winfield Returns to His Post, but Timing Unclear - Now Winfield finally relieves Leidig and resumes his duties as DDO. This happens after Flight 93 has crashed in Pennsylvania (see [\(10:03 a.m.-10:10 a.m.\) September 11, 2001](#) and [\(10:06 a.m.\) September 11, 2001](#)), although the exact time is unclear. In a private interview with the 9/11 Commission, Leidig will say he is "certain that Winfield returned [from the meeting] after the Pentagon was hit" at 9:37 a.m. (see [9:37 a.m. September 11, 2001](#)), but he "is not certain of Winfield's arrival in relationship with the vice chairman" of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, General Richard Myers. [[9/11 Commission, 4/29/2004](#) ] (According to the 9/11 Commission Report, Myers arrived at the NMCC shortly before 10:00 a.m. (see [\(Between 9:55 a.m. and 10:25 a.m.\) September 11, 2001](#)). [[9/11 Commission, 7/24/2004, pp. 38](#)]) Winfield then takes over as DDO "at some point in relation to the report of the Pennsylvania crash," according to Leidig. As the 9/11 Commission will point out, since the crash of Flight 93 happened around 10:03 a.m., "any reporting would be after that time." [[9/11 Commission, 4/29/2004](#) ] During a public hearing of the 9/11 Commission, Leidig will similarly say that Winfield takes over from him "[r]ight after we resolved what was going on with United 93." He will also say that a report over the NMCC's air threat conference at 10:37 a.m., about an anonymous threat against Air Force One (see [\(10:32 a.m.\) September 11, 2001](#)), occurs "right after I was relieved on the watch by General Winfield." [[9/11 Commission, 6/17/2004](#)] This would indicate that Winfield takes over from Leidig at around 10:30 a.m.

Unclear If Winfield Returns to Post Immediately after Meeting - It is also unclear whether Winfield returns to his position as DDO immediately after leaving the Air Force-convened meeting, or he allowed Leidig to continue in his place even while he was available to resume his duties. A 9/11 Commission memorandum will state, "Winfield transitioned into the position [of DDO] upon his return to the NMCC," following the meeting. [[9/11 Commission, 7/21/2003](#) ] Leidig will recall that he "looked up at one point and General Winfield was standing next to him." He will also recall that Myers "looked at him at one time and realized the coordinator [i.e. the DDO] was not a general as the position called for, and asked who the general or admiral was that had duty that day." The guidance that was subsequently given was "to get General Winfield briefed up and in the chair."

Leidig Listens to Conference before Returning to Post - After Winfield returns to his position as DDO, Leidig initially "stands next to him and listens to the [NMCC's air threat] conference." Leidig will then transition into his regular job, which involves making sure the NMCC operates properly, and start dealing with the smoke coming into the center and other issues effecting operations there. [[9/11 Commission, 4/29/2004](#) 

[\(10:30 a.m.\) September 11, 2001: Missing Defense Secretary Rumsfeld Finally Enters NMCC](#)

Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld, missing for at least 30 minutes, finally enters the NMCC, where the military's response to the 9/11 attacks is being coordinated. [[CNN, 9/4/2002](#); [9/11 Commission, 6/17/2004](#)] Rumsfeld later claims that he only started to gain a situational awareness of what was happening after arriving at the NMCC. [[9/11 Commission, 6/17/2004](#)] Rumsfeld was in his office only 200 feet away from the NMCC until the Pentagon crash at 9:37 a.m. (see [9:37 a.m. September 11, 2001](#)). His activities during this period are unclear. He went outside to the Flight 77 crash site and then stayed somewhere else in the Pentagon until his arrival at the NMCC. Brigadier General Montague Winfield later says, "For 30 minutes we couldn't find him. And just as we began to worry, he walked into the door of the [NMCC]." [[ABC News, 9/11/2002](#)] Winfield himself apparently only shows up at the NMCC around 10:30 a.m. as well.

(10:40 a.m.) September 11, 2001: First Fighter Seen Arriving over the Pentagon



Mike Walter. [Source: CNN] According to a number of witnesses on the ground, a US Air Force F-16 flies low over the Pentagon at this time; apparently becoming the first fighter to arrive over the scene of the third attack. [[American Forces Press Service, 10/11/2001](#); [Creed and Newman, 2008, pp. 130-131](#)] Firefighters and other emergency responders at the Pentagon recently evacuated away from the crash site, due to reports of another supposedly hijacked aircraft flying toward Washington (see [\(10:15 a.m.-10:38 a.m.\) September 11, 2001](#)). [[US Department of Health and Human Services, 7/2002, pp. A30](#)]

■ Steve Carter, the assistant building manager, is in the Pentagon's center courtyard, expecting this plane to hit the building. He then sees an F-16 zoom "low and fast over the courtyard." [[Creed and Newman, 2008, pp. 130](#)]

■ On Washington Boulevard, where many fire and rescue personnel relocated during the evacuation, cheers go up when the F-16 flies over. Firefighter Mike Smith shouts out: "Thank God that guy's there! Where has he been?" [[Creed and Newman, 2008, pp. 130-131](#)]

■ Lieutenant Commander Dale Rielage will recall that an "arriving combat air patrol F-16 thundered overhead" after the alleged second hijacked plane was said to be approaching the Pentagon. [[Fire Engineering, 11/1/2002](#)]

■ John Jester, the chief of the Defense Protective Service, which guards the Pentagon, says that, following the evacuation, "It wasn't until an F-15 fighter jet crossed in the sky that we realized the danger had passed." [[Murphy, 2002, pp. 246-247](#)]

■ USA Today reporter Mike Walter, who has been at the Pentagon since the attack there, recalls that, after the evacuation, an "F-16 came screaming by the Pentagon, and people cheered." [[People, 9/24/2001](#)]

■ Staff Sergeant Edwin Rotger Jr. will also describe seeing fighters arriving over the Pentagon at this time. However, he says there are two of them, not one. [[Office of Medical History, 9/2004, pp. 49](#)]

■ According to the New York Times, "witnesses, including a reporter for the New York Times who was headed toward the building, did not see any [fighter jets over the Pentagon] until closer to 11 [o'clock]." [[New York Times, 9/16/2001](#)]

According to some accounts, the fighter that flies over the Pentagon at this time is Major Billy Hutchison's F-16 from Andrews Air Force Base (see [\(10:38 a.m.\) September 11, 2001](#)). [[Spencer, 2008, pp. 235](#)] Hutchison will recall, "I circled at a couple of hundred feet at the most just to, one, investigate, and two, give the people on the ground some semblance of security of an American fighter coming by" (see [10:39 a.m.-10:45 a.m. September 11, 2001](#)). [[Filson, 2003, pp. 81-82](#)] However, some accounts contradict this. Major Dean Eckmann, from Langley Air Force Base, suggests his F-16 is the first to fly over the Pentagon, and this was at some time shortly after 9:45 a.m. (see [\(9:45 a.m.\) September 11, 2001](#)). He will say: "I heard stories that people went back in [the Pentagon] after seeing me fly over to help others out.... Now they knew they were safe." [[Filson, 2003, pp. 66](#)] Other accounts similarly suggest that the first fighter jet (or jets) arrived over the Pentagon significantly earlier than is described by the witnesses on the ground, between 9:49 and 10:00 a.m. (see [\(Between 9:49 a.m. and 11:00 a.m.\) September 11, 2001](#)). [[CNN, 9/17/2001](#); [9/11 Commission, 8/26/2004, pp. 34](#)]

(Between 11:00 a.m. and 12:00 p.m.) September 11, 2001: Mystery Firefighters Seen Behaving Oddly inside Pentagon

A mysterious fire crew is witnessed inside the Pentagon, behaving completely at odds with how firefighters are trained to act. [[Creed and Newman, 2008, pp. 137](#)] Chad Stamps is a firefighter with Rescue 104 of the Arlington County Fire Department. [[National Fire and Rescue, 5/2002](#)] Along with his crew, he has been fighting fires on the second floor of the Pentagon's outer E Ring. With fires burning around him, he is astonished to see another crew walk past, carrying two packs of hose line, apparently on its way to fight fires elsewhere in the Pentagon. Describing this incident, authors Patrick Creed and Rick Newman will point out: "Firefighters are trained *never* to go through a fire without putting it out, since it might seal off your exit. You might as well walk into a burning room and lock the door behind you. Yet there they went." Seeing the crew passing by, Stamps thinks, "This is totally disjointed." [[Creed and Newman, 2008, pp. 137](#)] The odd behavior of this crew is perhaps notable because there is at least one reported incident of fake firefighters being caught at the Pentagon following the attack there: On September 12, three people will be arrested who are not firefighters, yet who are dressed in firefighting gear (see [September 12, 2001](#)). [[Goldberg et al., 2007, pp. 170](#)]

(After 11:15 a.m.) September 11, 2001: Military Unit near Pentagon Prevented from Launching Helicopters to Assist Recovery



Helicopters belonging to the 12th Aviation Battalion. [Source: *United States Army*] Helicopter crews with an Army aviation unit based near the Pentagon are initially unable to launch after returning from weapons training, because, they are told, they are “locked down until further notice.” [Army Center of Military History, 11/14/2001] The 12th Aviation Battalion is stationed at Davison Army Airfield, which is at Fort Belvoir, 12 miles south of the Pentagon. It is the Military District of Washington’s aviation support unit, and includes three helicopter companies that fly UH-1 “Huey” and UH-60 Black Hawk helicopters. [Military District of Washington, 8/2000] But at the time of the attacks on the World Trade Center, an unspecified number of the battalion’s members were away at the shooting range at Fort AP Hill, for their annual weapons training (see 8:46 a.m.-9:37 a.m. September 11, 2001). They only set out on the one and a half to two hours drive back to base after the Pentagon was hit. One of the battalion’s helicopter pilots, who says the Pentagon is “basically one of our missions,” will later recall that after arriving back at Davison Airfield, his company commander “pretty much had us all get together, and he broke us down into aviation crews... and then he briefed us on what to expect.” The battalion’s helicopters are put “online,” meaning “we preflight our aircraft, got ready, and we went ahead and took everything out.” But, the pilot will say: “then basically we were locked down until further notice. That’s what we were told. And at that point, aviation got hit the hardest, so nobody was flying anywhere unless we had specific permission.... It was a waiting game.” The first helicopter to take off from Davison Airfield transports some engineers to the Pentagon, though the time it launches at is unstated. The 12th Aviation Battalion helicopters will subsequently be involved with supporting Operation Noble Eagle, the new homeland defense mission after 9/11. [Army Center of Military History, 11/14/2001]

(12:00 p.m.) September 11, 2001 and After: FBI Searches Pentagon Surroundings for Plane Debris



Personnel from several agencies searching for evidence at the Pentagon. [Source: *Federal Bureau of Investigation*] Beginning shortly before midday on September 11, 2001, and continuing until September 12, the FBI conducts a careful search across the grounds of the Pentagon, looking for remnants of the aircraft that hit the building. [PBS, 9/12/2001; Washington Post, 9/12/2001; Goldberg et al., 2007, pp. 159] FBI Special Agent Tom O’Connor is in charge of the initial evidence recovery operation at the Pentagon. His first priority is to locate and gather all the airplane parts and other pieces of evidence from the lawn on the west side of the building. He sends out all available agents to conduct a grid search. The lawn is divided into quadrants, and then agents walk back and forth, sticking a small flag near any evidence they find, getting the evidence photographed in its place, and then scooping it into a bag. [Creed and Newman, 2008, pp. 180] Arlington police officers, military personnel, and others also participate in the search. [Goldberg et al., 2007, pp. 159] They also look for evidence across grass and roadways several hundred yards from the Pentagon. [PBS, 9/12/2001] Some pieces of the aircraft that hit the Pentagon are found nearly 1,000 feet away from the building, on the other side of Washington Boulevard. Thousands of tiny pieces of aluminum have also been carried forward over the Pentagon, into its center courtyard. Other pieces of debris landed on its roof, along with body parts from at least one victim. [Creed and Newman, 2008, pp. 29]

According to the Defense Department's book about the Pentagon attack, the searchers find "many scraps and a few personal items widely scattered on the grass and heliport. Plane remnants varied from half-dollar size to a few feet long." [[Goldberg et al., 2007, pp. 159](#)] Authors Patrick Creed and Rick Newman will describe: "Agents found what looked like a big Plexiglas windowpane on the lawn, which might have been part of an airplane window, except it was too big.... Somebody suggested it could be one of the blast-proof windows from the Pentagon, somehow blown 500 feet from the building." [[Creed and Newman, 2008, pp. 180](#)]

(12:15 p.m.) September 11, 2001: FBI Still Lacks Full Investigative Capability at Pentagon

Due to the chaos and gridlock resulting from the morning's attacks, the FBI is hampered in mobilizing its investigative operation at the Pentagon. Because the Pentagon is a crime scene, it is the FBI's job to gather and document every piece of evidence there. [[Creed and Newman, 2008, pp. 177](#)] Special Agent Chris Combs, the FBI's representative at the crash site, has been setting up the FBI operation since arriving at 9:49 a.m. [[US Department of Health and Human Services, 7/2002, pp. A20 and 1-1](#); [Creed and Newman, 2008, pp. 178](#)] Since before 10:00 a.m., the bureau's evidence recovery team has been arriving. But although every available agent has been paged, many are stuck in traffic, and it will take several hours before the entire FBI contingent makes it to the Pentagon. The FBI also has a fleet of sophisticated command vehicles and helicopters, plus other specialized equipment. But even though the crash site is within the "FBI's backyard," according to authors Patrick Creed and Rick Newman, by around 12:15 p.m. none of this has arrived yet. The bureau's rapid-deployment gear, which includes everything needed to gather and document evidence, is stored in a warehouse in Washington, DC. But with traffic in the region at a standstill, it is almost impossible to get this through the streets to the Pentagon. Chris Combs asks his boss at the FBI's Washington field office if any helicopters are available to get equipment to the Pentagon quickly. But several choppers at the FBI facility in Quantico, just 30 miles south of the Pentagon, are reserved for specific duties during government emergencies and are currently locked down. And according to Creed and Newman, other government helicopters the bureau relies upon for backup are tied up, though what they are being used for is unstated. [[US Department of Health and Human Services, 7/2002, pp. A22](#); [Creed and Newman, 2008, pp. 177-179](#)] Furthermore, NBC News has reported that the FBI's top teams have been away from Washington for the last two days for a major training exercise in California (see [10:03 a.m. September 11, 2001](#)). This means about 50 personnel, plus helicopters and equipment, are currently out of place and unavailable. [[NBC 4, 9/11/2001](#)]

(12:15 p.m.) September 11, 2001: FBI Limits What Evidence Needs to Be Photographed at Pentagon



Garrett McKenzie. [*Source: Rudi Williams*] Photographers who are taking pictures at the Pentagon, to document the scene of the attack there in as close as possible to its original state, are told to limit what evidence they photograph. FBI Special Agent Tom O'Connor—who is in charge of the initial evidence recovery operation at the Pentagon—and his superiors have put out the word that it is unnecessary to document every piece of the airplane. This is because, reportedly, "the smaller fragments didn't prove anything, except that there was an airplane there, which was obvious enough from other evidence." FBI Special Agent Garrett McKenzie, who is coordinating the effort to photograph evidence at the Pentagon, pulls together a dozen photographers for a briefing. He instructs them: "We don't need to photograph all the plane parts, only unique airplane parts or something specific. Like the pilot's yoke, or anything with part of a serial number on it. If we have to prove what kind of plane this was, the serial numbers will be what we need." [[Creed and Newman, 2008, pp. 181-183](#)]

(12:15 p.m.) September 11, 2001: FBI Establishes Command Post near Pentagon



The Navy Annex, located next to the Virginia State Police Barracks. [Source: *Arlington County After-Action Report*] The FBI establishes a command post for its response to the Pentagon attack at the Virginia State Police Barracks, overlooking the Pentagon. [Fire Engineering, 11/2002] Around midday, Assistant Special Agent in Charge Robert Blecksmith arrived at the Pentagon and took over from Special Agent Chris Combs as the FBI's on scene commander. He had quickly decided that the area around the Arlington County Fire Department's incident command post by the Pentagon was too crowded and lacked support facilities. He therefore decides it will be safer for the FBI to carry out its operations at the Virginia State Police Barracks, located next to the Navy Annex, a few hundred yards from the Pentagon. Along with Combs, Blecksmith establishes the FBI's command post there, and starts moving the FBI up to it. The two men will spend most of the afternoon at the barracks, where they work on establishing a Joint Operations Center (JOC) at nearby Fort Myer. [US Department of Health and Human Services, 7/2002, pp. A23 and C50; Creed and Newman, 2008, pp. 178] The JOC will open early the following morning (see September 12, 2001). [Goldberg et al., 2007, pp. 161]

(2:00 p.m.) September 11, 2001: False Alarm over Approaching Aircraft Leads to Pentagon Evacuation, Disrupting Firefighting and Evidence-Gathering Operations



James Schwartz. [Source: *Arlington County, Virginia*] Firefighting and other operations are severely disrupted when the Pentagon site is evacuated due to a report of an unidentified aircraft heading toward the Pentagon. Firefighters have to abandon their equipment and run several hundred yards to protected areas. [US Department of Health and Human Services, 7/2002, pp. A16 and A30] Assistant Fire Chief James Schwartz orders the evacuation after the control tower at Washington's Reagan National Airport notifies the Arlington County Emergency Communications Center (ECC) of an inbound aircraft that is not identifying itself and is heading up the Potomac River at a high rate of speed. It is not known if this is a hijacked plane, but no aircraft other than military jets are now supposed to be in the air. The ECC then notifies Schwartz at the Pentagon. By the time he orders the evacuation, the aircraft is reportedly just two minutes away. [US Department of Health and Human Services, 7/2002, pp. A30 and A52; Creed and Newman, 2008, pp. 187] At one point, the controllers at Reagan Airport are reporting that the plane has disappeared from radar, though they do not say why they think this is. [Creed and Newman, 2008, pp. 191]

Approaching Aircraft Is 'Friendly' - The unidentified aircraft is soon determined to be "friendly." [Fire Engineering, 11/2002; Creed and Newman, 2008, pp. 193] According to the Arlington County After-Action Report, it turns out to have been a government aircraft flying Attorney General John Ashcroft back to Washington. [US Department of Health and Human Services, 7/2002, pp. A30 and C52; Vogel, 2007, pp. 453] However, a 2002 FAA report will state that Ashcroft's plane landed in Washington "just before noon" (see (12:00 p.m.) September 11, 2001). [Federal Aviation Administration, 3/21/2002] If that report is correct, then the identity of the approaching aircraft is unclear.

Emergency Operations Disrupted - The firefighters and other emergency responders return to the Pentagon and resume their activities, but the evacuation has significantly disrupted firefighting operations, giving fires in some areas 30 minutes to gain ground. [US Department of Health and Human Services, 7/2002, pp. A16; Creed and Newman, 2008, pp. 193-194] The FBI's evidence recovery

operation has also been disrupted. [[Creed and Newman, 2008, pp. 191](#)]

Evacuation Avoidable, Caused by Loss of FBI Presence - This evacuation is later determined to have been avoidable, and only necessary because of the loss of a senior FBI presence at the incident command post (ICP) at the Pentagon, which means there is no way for the ICP to verify whether the approaching aircraft is “friendly” or not. This loss is due to the FBI having relocated to the Virginia State Police Barracks shortly after midday (see [\(12:15 p.m.\) September 11, 2001](#)). The Arlington County After-Action Report will later conclude, “Friendly aircraft, carrying US government executives and escorted by fighter aircraft, should not have been cause for evacuation.” A previous evacuation of the Pentagon site due to reports of an approaching unidentified aircraft occurred around 10:15 a.m. (see [\(10:15 a.m.-10:38 a.m.\) September 11, 2001](#)), and a third similar evacuation will occur on the morning of September 12 (see [\(10:00 a.m.\) September 12, 2001](#)). [[US Department of Health and Human Services, 7/2002, pp. A30-A31; Fire Engineering, 11/2002](#)]

5:40 p.m. September 11, 2001: Chairman of the Joint Chiefs Shelton Arrives at Pentagon Command Center after Returning to US

General Henry Shelton, the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, finally arrives at the National Military Command Center (NMCC) at the Pentagon after returning to the US when his flight to Europe was aborted.

Vice Chairman Updates Shelton - After Shelton enters the NMCC, General Richard Myers, the vice chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, briefs him. Myers says that Air National Guard and regular Air Force combat air patrols are flying above major US cities under AWACS control, the entire US military is on Threatcon level Delta, and the Joint Forces Command is sending headquarters units to New York and Washington, DC.

Intelligence Director Says Only One 'Hint' Indicated Possible Attack - Shelton then turns to Vice Admiral Tom Wilson, the director of the Defense Intelligence Agency, and Rear Admiral Lowell Jacoby, the director of intelligence for the Joint Staff, and asks them, “Have we had any intel ‘squeaks’ on an attack like this—anything at all?” Wilson replies: “The only possible hint of this coming was several months ago when we got a single intercept requesting jumbo jet training. Since then, there’s been nothing.” Myers will later comment that Wilson is “referring to the vast electronic signals data-mining operations of our intelligence community that targeted known terrorist networks, such as al-Qaeda and their allies.” [[Myers, 2009, pp. 159](#)]

Shelton Flying to Europe at Time of Attacks - Shelton was flying across the Atlantic Ocean to Hungary for a NATO conference when he learned of the terrorist attacks in the US, and had ordered that his plane return to Washington (see [\(8:50 a.m.-10:00 a.m.\) September 11, 2001](#)). After flying over the site of the collapsed Twin Towers in New York, Shelton’s plane landed at Andrews Air Force Base, just outside Washington. The time it landed at is unstated. From there, three patrol cars and about a dozen motorcycle cops escorted the chairman and his accompanying staff members as they were driven to the Pentagon. Once at the Pentagon, Shelton initially went to his office and then visited the site of the attack, to see the wreckage there. After returning to the building, he headed to the NMCC. [[Gieseemann, 2008, pp. 22-32; Shelton, Levinson, and McConnell, 2010, pp. 430-436](#)]

Chairman in Office for Much of Evening - Shelton will spend much of the evening in his office with staff, preparing for meetings of the National Security Council later this evening and the following day (see [\(9:00 p.m.-10:00 p.m.\) September 11, 2001](#) and [September 12, 2001](#)). At 6:42 p.m., he will join Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld and Senators Carl Levin (D-MI) and John Warner (R-VA) to give a news briefing (see [6:42 p.m. September 11, 2001](#)), and at around 9:00 p.m. he will head to the White House for the National Security Council meeting there. [[CNN, 9/12/2001; Priest, 2003, pp. 37; Shelton, Levinson, and McConnell, 2010, pp. 436](#)]

(6:15 p.m.) September 11, 2001: President Bush Makes Brief, Secret Visit to Pentagon?

Deputy Secretary of Defense Gordon England will later claim that President Bush makes an unpublicized visit to the Pentagon at this time. In 2007, England will recall in a speech, “Then that night, on 9/11, we had a meeting in the Pentagon—and I remember this well, because the president came to the Pentagon that evening, at 6:15 in the evening... And the president came and met in the conference room right next to Secretary Rumsfeld’s office. And he came and he said, ‘Get ready.’ He said, ‘Get ready.’ He said, ‘This is going to be a long war.’” [[US Department of Defense, 1/22/2007](#)] If this account is true, then Air Force One must have flown very quickly from Nebraska (if reports are true Bush left at 4:33 (see [\(4:33 p.m.\) September 11, 2001](#)), the plane would have travelled at about 700 mph, faster than its official top speed of 600 mph), and Bush must have stayed at the Pentagon briefly before arriving live on camera at the White House around 6:45 (see [\(6:54 p.m.\) September 11, 2001](#)). If Bush did go to the Pentagon, is it not exactly clear why or why no account would mention it until 2007.

6:42 p.m. September 11, 2001: Rumsfeld, Shelton, White, and Senators Give News Briefing on Attacks



Donald Rumsfeld speaking at his 6:42 p.m. news briefing. Behind the secretary of defense, left to right, are Thomas White, Henry Shelton, John Warner, and Carl Levin. [Source: Bob Houlihan/US Navy] Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld and four other senior officials give a news briefing at the Pentagon, which is broadcast live around the world, to reassure the public that the US government is still functioning and the nation is strong, and during the briefing Rumsfeld says that, despite the devastating attack there, the Pentagon will reopen the following day. [[Government Executive, 9/11/2001](#); [CNN, 9/12/2001](#); [Giesemann, 2008, pp. 34](#); [Shelton, Levinson, and McConnell, 2010, pp. 436](#)] Joining Rumsfeld in the Pentagon press room to give the briefing are Senators Carl Levin (D-MI) and John Warner (R-VA), the chairman of the Senate Armed Services Committee and the committee's ranking minority member, respectively; General Henry Shelton, the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, who has returned to the US after his flight to Europe was aborted (see [\(8:50 a.m.-10:00 a.m.\) September 11, 2001](#)); and Secretary of the Army Thomas White, who has come to the Pentagon from the alternate command location. [[US Department of Defense, 9/11/2001](#); [Goldberg et al., 2007, pp. 145](#)] Levin and Warner called Rumsfeld earlier in the day, promising him their wholehearted support, and he had suggested they come over to the Pentagon. [[Clarke, 2006, pp. 228](#)]

Officials Addressing Millions of Americans - As Rumsfeld and the four other men stood outside the press room before the briefing, Assistant Secretary of Defense for Public Affairs Victoria Clarke informed them, "Gentlemen, you are about to address 320 million Americans who have witnessed an unspeakable tragedy today." [[Giesemann, 2008, pp. 34](#)]

Pentagon 'Will Be in Business Tomorrow' - Rumsfeld begins the briefing, reading out a statement he has written by hand. He says, "This is a tragic day for our country," and adds, "We have taken a series of measures to prevent further attacks and to determine who is responsible." After summarizing some of the Defense Department's actions throughout the day, Rumsfeld gives reassurance that the Pentagon is still up and running, pointing out that "the briefing here is taking place in the Pentagon. The Pentagon's functioning," and, he adds, "It will be in business tomorrow." Shelton calls the day's terrorist attacks "an outrageous act of barbaric terrorism carried out by fanatics," and states, "I have no intentions of discussing today what comes next, but make no mistake about it, your armed forces are ready."

'No Information' that Military Shot Down Any Aircraft - Rumsfeld takes a number of questions from reporters, but refuses to speculate about any uncertain information. When asked: "What about Osama bin Laden? Do you suspect him as the prime suspect in this?" Rumsfeld answers, "It's not the time for discussions like that." One reporter says, "[T]here were rumors earlier in the day that the plane which crashed in Pennsylvania had been brought down by the United States, either shot down or in some other manner," to which Rumsfeld responds, "We have absolutely no information that any US aircraft shot down any other aircraft today." [[US Department of Defense, 9/11/2001](#); [Clarke, 2006, pp. 230-231](#)]

Briefing Would Be a 'Powerful Statement' - The briefing has come about because Clarke felt earlier on that Rumsfeld should do a media briefing today and that, despite the objections of others, it should be conducted at the Pentagon, as this would be "the most powerful statement we could deliver that we were open for business." Rumsfeld agreed with Clarke's suggestion to hold such a briefing. [[Clarke, 2006, pp. 229-230](#)] Shelton will later recall that the feedback the briefing generates "by far surpassed any other I have ever received. The nation was obviously shaken and looking for reassurance that their government was still functioning." [[Shelton, Levinson, and McConnell, 2010, pp. 436](#)]

<http://www.flcv.com/offcom77.html>

Evidence of Pentagon and military officials complicity in 9/11 events and participation along with 9/11 Commission authors in an obvious cover-up.

Fl 77 Pentagon Boeing 757
Original FAA/NORAD Time Line

8:20 AM Takeoff from Dulles Airport, D.C.

8:25 FAA notified all Regional FAA offices of Flight 11 hijacking

8:25 bridge call between FAA, NMCC, DOT, DOD, etc. started by NMCC as significant incident conference when Fl 11 hijacking reported and later upgraded to air threat conference dealing with all "planes of interest"

8:31 a.m. NORAD employee Lt. Colonel Dawne Deskins says that Boston flight control [notifies NORAD of Flight 11's hijacking](#) at this time

8:42 FAA confirmed radio and transponder off on Flight 175

8:43 FAA notifies NORAD that a second plane appears to be hijacked and has turned towards N Y

8:46 NEADS(NORAD) scrambles 2 jets from Otis AFB to N Y

8:46 FAA notes FL 77 significantly off course; this is supported by USA Today published flight course time line

8:47 WTC1 hit by airplane;

8:50 No radio contact with Fl 77

8:50 bridge call between FAA, DOD, DOT, NORAD, NMCC re: "all planes of interest"

8:50 White House Secret Service has a continuous connection to FAA after Flight 11 hit WTC1

8:55 a plane assumed to be Fl 77 seen on FAA radar heading east over West

Virginia: Senator Levin during testimony of Gen. Ralph Eberhart, commander of NORAD, before the Senate Armed Services Committee on October 25

8:56 transponder off on Fl 77 and plane turned around over NE Kentucky

8:57 report by FAA that Fl 77 crashed or landed near Kentucky/Ohio border/ lost on radar

9:03 a plane hits WTC2; notification sent out by FAA

9:04 FAA closes down all air traffic takeoffs in Northeastern U.S.

9:04 FAA Controllers in New York and Washington are briefed to watch for planes whose speed indicates they are jets, but which have transponders

turned off or are not responding to radio.

9:03 Secret Service calls Andrews AFB and tells them to prepare jets to scramble

9:05 3 F-16 jets from Andrews AFB were on a training flight in North Carolina but [could have been recalled to D.C. before 9:00 AM](#) as the trip takes less than 15 minutes.

9:03 to 9:16 President Bush is sitting listening to a book being read to elementary students in Sarasota, Florida- even though he was [told that a second hijacked plane had hit WTC2](#).

9:06 a.m. All air traffic facilities nationwide are notified that the Flight 11 crash into the WTC was probably a hijacking.

9:05 [West Virginia FAA ATC](#) notices a plane headed towards D.C. without a transponder on.

9:09 NORAD orders Langley jets to [battle station alert](#)

9:17 FAA shuts down all New York area air ports

9:21 FAA contacts NORAD and says a plane is still heading towards D.C. (confirmed, page 21 of 9/11 Comm. Report)

9:24 FAA contacts NORAD and says Fl 77 may have been hijacked and is headed towards D.C.

9:25 NORAD scrambles jets from Langley AFB heading to D.C.

9:25 Ted Olsen, U.S. Justice Dept., says that he was called by his wife Barbara who was on UA77. He said she said the flight had been hijacked. But he gave several versions of the call and said that the call was collect from a plane air phone because she did not have a credit card, which is not possible.

9:26 FAA Head Jane Garvey initiates a national ground stop, grounding all U.S. air craft. Transportation Sec. Mineta, who was in the White House operation center with V.P. Cheney, also indicated he took part in this decision.

9:27 V.P. Cheney in the White House operation center is told that a [plane is 50 miles out heading towards the capital](#).

9:30 jets in the air heading to D.C. (130 mile trip, 6 minute trip at 25 miles per minute)

9:38 something hits the Pentagon, jets reported to be off course and still 105 miles away

9:38 C130 electronic warfare plane following the plane that hit the Pentagon [flies through the smoke at the Pentagon](#)

9:40 Jets from Andrews AFB ordered scrambled by Gen Myers and are soon in the air.

Note: General Richard Myers, commander of U.S. Forces, and the NORAD spokesman Mike Snyder both originally reported that no jets were scrambled by the military until after the Pentagon was hit. After considerable criticism of an apparent military stand down, the new report was issued indicating that FAA notified NORAD at 9:24 and planes were scrambled but got lost and arrived too late. After more criticism of both earlier scenarios as implying a military stand down, the 9/11 Commission revised the time line and official scenario again in 2004, stating that the Pentagon was unaware that there was a plane heading towards D.C. until it was hit. And that the earlier report that planes had been scrambled to intercept Flight 77 were in error. [this is clearly contradicted by considerable testimony and evidence]

New Revised 9/11 Commission Time Line(2004)

8:20 Flight 77 takeoff from Dulles Airport
8:38 FAA contacts NORAD that Fl 11 hijacked, NORAD spends 8 minutes on calls up chain of command
8:46 jets scrambled from Otis AFB to New York
8:47 WTC1 hit, notice goes out to FAA offices
8:52 2 jets from Otis AFB are in air to N Y
8:54 Flight 77 significantly off course
8:56 transponder signal and radar track lost, assumed to have crashed or landed
9:00 FAA head Jane Garvey notifies the White House that a plane has crashed in Kentucky
9:03 a plane hits WTC2 South Tower, military was never notified by FAA
9:21 FAA reported to NORAD that Flight 11 did not hit WTC1 and is headed towards D.C.
9:24 NORAD scrambles 3 jets from Langley AFB to Washington to intercept Fl 11 but does not know where target is; pilots make a mistake and fly out to sea far away from D.C.
9:25 FAA controller tells FAA HQ they think Flight 77 may have been hijacked
9:36 FAA Boston notifies NORAD of plane heading towards DC
9:38 plane hits Pentagon; NORAD never notified that plane was headed to D.C., Pentagon notified only 2 minutes before building was hit

The new revised 9/11 Comm. Scenario for Fl 77 said that the previous report of course changes and turning around(as also reported by news reports) were wrong and that the FAA was not aware that the plane had turned around and was heading towards D.C. So the plane flew undetected towards Washington for 36 minutes. The Comm. Report states that the military was never notified that the plane was headed towards D.C. and was never aware that the plane was hijacked. The Commission said that earlier reports and statements that NORAD was notified about the Fl 175 and Fl 77 hijackings were in error. The Comm. Said that the real reason that the Langley jets were scrambled to D.C. was that the FAA had reported at 9:21 that Flight 11 that had earlier been reported to have hit WTC1 was actually still in the air and heading towards D.C. They were aware of this new report for the first time in 2004 and used it to correct the time line. The Comm. said however that it was unable to identify the source of the report or who took the report. The Comm. Said that at 9:36 when the jet pilots were contacted to intercept Flight 11 which was thought to be headed towards D.C., the planes were still 105 miles away because the pilots had misunderstood their instructions and headed east out to sea. [Flight Controllers at FAA who were monitoring Flight 11 had stated to reporters that they never lost sight of Fl 11 and watched it all the way to WTC1 and were aware of the crash, which was reported to all regional offices- so it is not known why the military and Comm. Were confused about this.

There is considerable evidence contradicting the 9/11 Comm. Revised time line and scenario.

1. Journalist Tom Flocco reported in 2003 that Laura Brown of FAA said that a phone bridge between the FAA and Charles Leidig of NMCC had begun between 8:20 and **8:25** after Fl 11 was known to be hijacked. This conference call was begun as a significant incident call after Fl 11 was hijacked but was upgraded later to an air threat call dealing with all "planes of interest". A source at the Dept. of Transportation confirmed the 8:25 time period for the bridge call between NORAD, Secret Service, DOD, and DOT.
[Later after controversy and a conversation with her supervisors, Laura Brown emailed that she wanted to revise her time estimate of the start of the earlier bridge call from 8:20 to 8:45. Tom Flocco stated his opinion that after talking to several parties, he is convinced the call started at the earlier time]
2. Laura Brown(senior FAA official at Boston Logan) (memo of May 23, 2003) The FAA and military and NORAD had been in constant communication from just after the first WTC crash and prior to the WTC2 crash(since approx. **8:50**) Many sources confirm this call and that they were talking about "all flights of interest".
3. Matthew Wald, NY Times published story **supports the Laura Brown** version of the call. It reported that according to his sources:
"During the hour that the Fl 77 was under the control of the hijackers, up to the moment it struck the west side of the Pentagon, military officials in a command center on the East Side of the Pentagon were urgently talking to law enforcement and air traffic control officials about what to do" (the command center is the NMCC and air traffic control is FAA)
4. Statement by Captain M. Jellinek, NORAD command director on 9/11, According to news reports quoting him, a bridge call between NMCC, NORAD, and FAA began just after the first strike on the WTC, **consistent with the time of the original Laura Brown memo.**
5. According to a report by Richard Clark, National Security Coordinator: He reported that the deputy director of the White House Situation Room told him at 9:15 that they had been on the air threat call with NORAD and FAA. This call had been going on a considerable time as it had begun as a significant event call and had been upgraded to an air threat call, and there had been many exchanges of information. According to Clarke, **the FAA head Jane Garvey was at the White House teleconference answering questions about the hijackings before 9:20 am.**

6. The Commission report said that it could not determine who from DOD participated in the teleconference with Clark and the FAA; however Richard Clarke had testified that **Gen Myers and Donald Rumsfeld and Jane Garvey were on the call.** Others confirm this.

Norman Mineta, Secretary of Transportation, said he met with Richard Clark who was on a conference call before going to the White House PEOC room to meet with V.P. Cheney at 9:20. So Clark was on the conference call by 9:15.7. Norman Mineta, Sec. of Transportation, testimony before 9/11 Comm.: on a meeting he was at with V.P. Cheney at the White House PEOC that he arrived at about 9:20:

“During the time that the airplane was coming in to the Pentagon, there was a young man who would come in and say to the vice president, “The plane is 50 miles out”; “The plane is 30 miles out”; And when it got down to “the plane is 10 miles out” the young man said to the vice president, “Do the orders still stand?” And the Vice President turned and whipped his neck around and said “Of course the orders still stand. Have you heard anything to the contrary?” [This documents that the military command was monitoring the plane, and some say that a decision was clearly made to not intercept it or shoot it down with missiles. This testimony by Mineta and that of Clark was not included in the Comm. Report]

Discrepancies in General Myers and Donald Rumsfeld’s statements

The 9/11 Commission Report apparently tries to deflect the criticism that Gen Myers complicit in the stand down by stating that Gen Myers was on Capital Hill meeting with Senator Cleland from 8:45 to 9:45 am about personnel matters during the period prior to the time that WTC and the Pentagon buildings were attacked. Thus he never took part in dealing with 9/11 events. [But some have stated this is strange behavior for the commander of U.S. forces to not be contacted and not take part when the U.S. was under attack]

Also this statement is contradicted by the report and testimony of Richard Clarke, the National Security Director. He said that Myers, Rumsfeld, Tenet, Muller, and Garvey were on a teleconference call about the attacks and that he had a discussion with Gen Myers about getting fighters up over Washington. He said Myers gave a report that we have 3 F 16s from Langley up over the Pentagon and Andrews is launching fighters from the DC air national guard(DCANG). This also contradicts Gen Myers statements to the effect that Andrews AFB had no planes on alert to defend the D.C. area. One of these men clearly isn’t telling the truth, and given the number of people on the teleconference call it is easy to confirm who it is.

Shortly after 9/11, Sec of Defense Donald Rumsfeld made a statement carried by news reports and on the DOD web site about his actions on 9/11. Apparently he was also anxious to imply that he had not been aware of the 9/11 events before the buildings were hit. He said that he heard something happened and went downstairs to see what happened and was told a plane had hit the Pentagon (he was in the East wing, plane hit the west wing which is a considerable distance away). He said he went to the crash site and helped with putting people on stretchers for loading in ambulances and returned to his office at about 10:20. In testimony to the 9/11 Comm., he gave a slightly different story. He said that when the plane hit the Pentagon shook and he went out to see what had happened. He said he wasn’t there long and returned to his office at about 10:00. Note that actions and times are important due to other events. The 9/11 Comm. agreed with the first report regarding actions and with the 2nd statement regarding the time of return to the office. But note the time that the plane hit and the fact that it is about a 10 minute walk from Rumsfeld’s office in the East wing to the west wing parking lot. Also there is contradictory testimony to any of these statements.

All of these statements are in conflict with Richard Clarke’s report, which is easily verifiable. Clarke said that Myers and Rumsfeld were on the teleconference call with him and others about the hijackings from about 9:15 until the plane hit the Pentagon. When the plane hit, Rumsfeld said that smoke was getting into the secure conference room so he moved to another studio at the Pentagon. This contradicts Rumsfeld’s statements on where he was and what he was doing. It also contradicts Myers and Rumsfeld’s statements that they were unaware of the status of FI 77 before it hit the Pentagon.

The Comm. Report appears to be an obvious attempt to cover up these discrepancies by not looking at or reporting information from testimony that was not consistent with the statements of Cheney, Myers, Rumsfeld, and other top DOD and military leaders. The testimony of Transportation Secretary who was in charge of all response to the non military response to the hijackings, and the testimony of National Security Coordinator Richard Clarke, that of many FBI agents such as Sibel Edmunds and Crowley and of other officials was not included or mentioned in the Comm. Report. The FBI agents testified that they were aware of prior warnings of the plans for the attacks and that they and others had warned the administration and Pentagon officials, and also that their efforts prior to 9/11 to prevent the attacks were stifled by FBI top level officials. Although the Commission Report says that the Pentagon only became aware of the plane heading to the Pentagon at 9:36 which was 2 minutes before the building was hit, it is clear this was not the case. Note another suspicious event that is contradictory to this statement besides the previous reports and testimony. The Comm. Report says that the Pentagon became aware of an unarmed military C 130H cargo plane in the Washington area and ordered it to find the plane and identify it. The C 130H pilot said that he spotted the plane, identified it as a Boeing 757, attempted to follow its path, and reported that it crashes into the Pentagon. Rather a lot of action in an extremely short time period when talking to a C130 pilot would not be high on official’s agenda. This is the primary source identifying that the plane that hit the Pentagon was a Boeing 757. Besides the obvious time complications, this story does not seem to be compatible with another story in the Commission Report about the plane that hit the Pentagon’s approach and actions. And another strange story of this C 130H being involved in Pennsylvania with the Flight 93 crash incident also have very confusing statements.

This information come from Chap 14 of the book of Dr. D.R. Griffin, The 9/11 Commission Report: Omissions and Distortions; the book has references for the sources of information quoted.

The plane hit the Pentagon 1 hour and 35 minutes after Flight 11 was reported to be hijacked; 52 minutes after WTC1 was hit; 48 minutes after Flight 77 was reported by FAA to be off course and with no radio contact; and 42 minutes after a plane was reported to be headed towards D.C.

Physical Evidence of Cordite Explosion and Complicity of some Officials at Pentagon

(Evidence of Explosives in Pentagon Attack)

<http://911research.wtc7.net/pentagon/analysis/index.html>

<http://911research.wtc7.net/pentagon/analysis/conclusions/explosion.html>

<http://911research.wtc7.net/pentagon/evidence/index.html>

Suppression of Evidence and Cover-up by officials regarding Pentagon crash

<http://911research.wtc7.net/pentagon/evidence/missing.html>

<http://911research.wtc7.net/pentagon/evidence/footage.html>

FAA Radar showed Flight 77 could not have hit the Pentagon:

<http://www.the-movement.com/air%20operation/Flight77.htm>

Implications of the Part of the Pentagon Struck on September 11th <http://911research.wtc7.net/pentagon/analysis/location.html>

Pentagon Videos Obvious Fakes to Cause Confusion, but fire color(white & red) not consistent with gasoline fire

<http://911research.wtc7.net/pentagon/analysis/videoframes.html>

<http://perso.wanadoo.fr/jpdesm/pentagon/pages-en/im-2ndlev.html>

Pentagon Photos <http://911research.wtc7.net/pentagon/evidence/photos/index.html>

Indestructible Pentagon lamp poles survived Boeing crash?

<http://home.debitel.net/user/andreas.bunkahle/plate45.htm>

Pentagon collapse caused by cutting charges

<http://home.debitel.net/user/andreas.bunkahle/plate46.htm>

Pentagon Conclusions:

- [An aircraft similar to or being a Boeing 757 or 737 approached the Pentagon and exploded at or in front of it.](#)
- [Several witnesses described a 737 as the plane hitting the Pentagon](#)
- [If the aircraft was a 757, portions of it were destroyed before impact.](#)
- [The attack involved an explosive detonation not explainable by jet fuel combustion.](#)