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MEMORANDUM FOR THE RECORD

Event: Mark Randol, former Manager of the Civil Aviation Security Field Office in Washington, DC

Type: Interview

Date: October 8, 2003

Special Access Issues: None

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Team: 7

Participants (non-Commission): Mark Randol, TSA Federal Security Director, Missoula MT; and Brandon Straus, TSA General Counsel's Office

Participants (Commission): Sam Brinkley, Bill Johnstone, John Raidt, and Lisa Sullivan

Background

(Unc)

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That's when he started to get into the "terrorism business."

(Unc) He moved to the small FAA Office of Intelligence in April 1988. The office expanded from that point. After the December 1988 destruction of Pan Am 103, the office experienced "phenomenal growth." In November 1989, Randol moved to Brussels to serve as an international aviation security inspector as which he did airport assessments throughout Europe. One year later he was assigned internal security functions as well. In October 1991, he came to FAA Headquarters in Washington, DC as a member of the International Division. In February 1992 he was assigned to ICAO (International Civil Aviation Organization), Aviation Security Branch, based in Montreal, where he managed a division that provided technical assistance to member countries, primarily to developing nations.

(Unc) From February 1993 through May 1998, Randol served on the FAA's Special Assessment team (also known as the "Red Team"). In May of 1998, he took the position as Washington, DC Civil Aviation Security Field Office (WDC CASFO) manager, a position he held until October of 2001. In this last position, his office was at Dulles (IAD), but he was responsible for a number of airports in the DC metro area, including Dulles, National and BWI. In October 2001 he was reassigned back to FAA Headquarters, where he worked under Mike Morse to provide support for the September

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11th data gathering effort in response to Congressional and other inquiries (including the Joint Intelligence Inquiry).

(Unc) In July 2002 he was selected to be TSA's Federal Security Director in Missoula, MT.

**ICAO knife standard**

(Unc) Randol had no specific recollection as to the basis for ICAO's standard with respect to the length of knife to be barred from aircraft cabins. He indicated that the standards themselves (contained in ICAO Annex 17) are very general. While the accompanying aviation security manual was more specific, it was more in the form of recommended practices and guidance, but was not mandatory. At ICAO, he dealt more with issues related to the screening and training methods of the countries he was inspecting. The knife standard wasn't an issue while he was there.

**Special Assessments unit ("Red Team")**

(SSI) Randol welcomed a question about the Red Team as an opportunity to correct certain things he had read that were "divorced from reality." He emphasized that the unit was not like an FAA IG team. It was a small team, at times as few as three (Boivin, Dzakovich, Randol), and there were limits (because of staffing and budget constraints) on how much they could do. For example, they couldn't travel all around and comprehensively look at the system. In addition, they were tasked with responsibilities in addition to covert testing of the system, including conducting security (including hijacking) exercises at Category X and Category I airports (including Atlanta). Outside entities, such as the FBI, could be brought in to these exercises. "The fact was we were small, had no budget and had other missions."

(SSI) The FAA leadership looked to the Red Team as a way to know how the security system worked when it doesn't know it is being watched. Among the major clandestine assessments done while Randol served with the unit

[Redacted]

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[Redacted]

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FAA Director of Security Irish Flynn was wrestling with the problem of the aviation industry "not wanting to spend one dime on security" that they didn't have to. Randol added that the airlines had a different perspective based on their own risk and cost-benefit assessments. Randol indicated that Flynn was worried that the x-ray systems then in use were "not effective" in finding

[Redacted]

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[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED] That was the purpose of the Red Team assessment,  
[REDACTED]

after which the FAA presented the data to help justify a budget request for more dollars for better detection technology, as well as to get industry to accept that the then-current security system was insufficient, even though it met FAA's formal security standards.

(Unc) According to Randol, "a lot of the stuff coming out about the Red Team is completely wrong." Special Assessments were good at detecting trends, and for discovering how effective the security standard was generally and to see how effectively people were adapting to new security protocols. They would write the report and hand it in to superiors who were responsible for following through. Certain things weren't followed up on, but the results were "never concealed." FAA leadership had them, and airport and airline personnel were given the results. He would have liked the system to have responded better to some findings, but he never felt that was caused by sinister motives.

#### CASFO for Washington, DC

(Unc) As manager of the Washington, DC CASFO, Randol was responsible for the FAA regulatory program at the airports in his territory and to do comprehensive and supplemental assessments of the airports and airlines. He had three offices (BWI, Dulles, National). These three CAT X airports were handled differently organizationally than the other airports because each CAT X airport also had an FAA Federal Security Manager (FSM). This produced bifurcated responsibility between the CASFO and the FSM and produced "constant turf battles." In Randol's view, industry loved to play the two off against each other. The FSM didn't have any staff (the CASFO did), and didn't perform the assessments. Randol regarded FSM's as more of a stakeholder liaison role. Randol's relations with FSMs varied from time to time and place to place.

(CS) Randol's relations with the first FSM he served with at Dulles (Bill Fink) were "not good at all" from the outset. He felt the FSM undermined him and his staff and was always questioning his motives. Fink was reassigned to FAA HQ in March 2001, and Bruce Parks who was the supervisor of Randol's field unit (CASFU) at Dulles, was made acting FSM, a position he held on September 11th. On that day, Parks was in training in Oklahoma City, and Randol designated [REDACTED] of his staff to fulfill FSM duties.

(Unc) Randol characterized the situation at Dulles in the period when Fink was FSM as involving a hostile industry group, among whom Fink characterized the CASFO's field tests (such as 2000 access control tests following a GAO report on deficiencies) as "gotcha" attempts to go after them. He further characterized the Metropolitan Washington Airports Authority (MWAA) as a powerful, and very political, organization, which was not afraid to "go public" in presenting its side of disputes. When the assessments caught the airports failing a test, the only recourse was to seek a civil penalty, which had to be decided by FAA Headquarters.

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**Security at Dulles International Airport**

(Unc) Randol believed that Dulles generally did a good job on security, and "tried to do the right thing." (He added that National and BWI were similar to Dulles in their performance, though BWI employed a more "collaborative" approach than the other two.)

(SSI) The custodial carrier at Dulles for passenger screening was United, which Randol characterized as "above average" in terms of the screening operation (which they contracted to Argenbright). The CASFO tested them "a lot" and United did its own assessments (which Randol termed a "decent program").

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(Unc) Randol was not aware of any publicly available information which highlighted specific security weaknesses at Dulles, and if he was a hijacker that was not the place he should have gone.

(Unc) Dulles' video recording system was put in prior to Randol's arrival. He thought it was a good idea not as important as other things. It doesn't make the screening better and

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However, it is helpful to have it to look back if there is a penetration.

**Suspicious Incident Reporting**

(Unc) Reports of security-related incidents generally went first to the FSM, who didn't always share the information with the CASFO. This was particularly a problem at Dulles until Fink's departure in March 2001. However, the working relationship was much better leading up to 9-11. Randol stated that the FSM received information on suspicious activities and Randol was confident that all suspicious activities would be reported to him, and he would pass it along up the FAA chain as appropriate. Thus, he was not aware of any special surveillance of Dulles by suspicious individuals in the lead-up to 9/11.

(SSI) In general, Randol believed that Dulles had "pretty good" security awareness, including its training for Secure Identification Display Area, or SIDA, training). However, he added that given its open nature, "someone could survey the checkpoints without being noticed."

(SSI) Randol was not aware of reports of [redacted] having raised the issue of box cutter at Dulles prior to September 11th, but he found it "highly implausible" that the system wouldn't have responded to such a claim, even though it was true that box cutters were a common item around aircraft because they were used by maintenance personnel. He also was unaware of reports from [redacted] regarding suspicious activities involving Middle Eastern-appearing individuals at Dulles on September 10th. However, Randol

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"can't imagine that wouldn't have raised flags." He was not aware of the existence of videotapes showing the hijackers at a Dulles terminal on the evening of September 10th. Randol indicated that the FBI had moved quickly to take such tapes on September 11th.

(SSI) Randol was also not aware of information about any performance deficiencies displayed on 9/11 by screener [REDACTED] but he pointed out that "no matter how good the screening was, if those (short-bladed knives) were detected they would have to give it back" to the passenger. In Randol's view, September 11th was not a screening failure.

### **The Events of 9/11/01**

(Unc) Randol was shown a report marked "WDC CASFO Operational Desk Blotter" (Commission document #?), which he indicated was a compilation of his notes on the 9/11 timeline. Between 9 and 9:15 AM (the document records 9:15 AM as the time), a MWAA police officer reported that an aircraft had hit the World Trade Center; Randol did not think terrorism at that point. By 9:25 AM, Marcus Arroyo (Regional manager) called to report several hijackings, including AAL #77, UAL #175 and UAL #177, and he made it clear that this was a terrorist act. Randol then immediately tasked his staff to find out everything they could about the flights. Randol remembers that the whole day was hectic. By 9:45 AM, they had identified that AAL #77 had departed from Dulles, but they could not confirm whether it had been hijacked, while they discovered that UAL #177 was being held at the gate in Boston.

(Unc) In Randol's view, there was nothing about Dulles that made it any weaker from a security standpoint than others. All airports are vulnerable. When asked how the hijackers beat the system on 9/11, he stated that the hijackers did their homework to look for vulnerabilities which they were able to exploit (for example that small bladed knives were able to get through the system). They then trained on how to break into the cockpit.

### **After-Action Report**

(Unc) The after action report prepared by WDC CASFO on AAL #77 was carried out pursuant to a directive from Regional manager Marcus Arroyo. There was also a written checklist in the FAA Crisis Management SOP which covered such reporting. The guidance was at the regional level, which was consistent with the standard protocol. Interviews and data from the report were sent on to regional and national headquarters. [REDACTED] was the lead for WDC CASFO in pulling that information together. There was "non-stop" questioning and tasking throughout the day.

(Unc) As a CASFO, Randol would expect that the CASFO's at the other impacted airports would have produced similar after action reports. The FBI was fair to him, and he felt that they were cooperative in the reporting process.

9/11 Working-level Employee

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### **Screening of Grounded Flights on 9/11**

(Unc) Randol did not recall receiving any instruction from FAA Headquarters or elsewhere on screening of grounded planes and their passengers on September 11th; this may have been something he was not directly privy to. Randol and his staff were focused on implementing the new security requirements which were beginning to come down, and which would have to be implemented before the system could be brought back up. Beginning on September 11<sup>th</sup>, he never heard anything from the FBI on suspicious activities involving other September 11th flights.

### **Aviation Security System**

(Unc) Randol indicated that the aviation security system is a product of tradeoffs between security, expense and convenience. Industry is resistant to being regulated and held accountable, which puts a lot of pressure on the regulators. On September 11th, Randol said "we had accepted a degree of risk and we got beat on it."

(Unc) Randol expressed the view that we will get much better screening with federal employees doing the screening because this will be a more professional job, presumably with good training, and with lower turnover due to higher pay. However, Congress is already imposing cutbacks on the screener budget. In addition, Randol pointed out that federalized screening circumvents the cumbersome rulemaking process, whereas access control and other security issues are still subject to that process, and that even now, when changes are proposed that would impact the industry, industry "pushes back" just like before.

(Unc) In Randol's view, TSA is falling into the same trap as FAA. It is "starting over from infancy" and making the same mistakes in catering to industry. In addition, TSA has brought in a lot of outsiders who have no clue about regulatory procedures. That's not the way FAA did it. FAA accumulated a lot of knowledge that isn't being utilized by TSA.

(Unc) Randol indicated that the new regulatory process envisages the FSD sitting with the stakeholders to resolve problems, with civil penalties as a last resort.

(Unc) From Randol's perspective, under TSA there has been less emphasis on the other security elements outside of screening. TSA has fewer agents for assessments and is less active in enforcement matters. Randol has heard anecdotes that field people are trying to do things and Headquarters is telling them to back off.

### **Recommendations**

(Unc) Randol feels that "you get what you pay for" with respect to security and you have to make an explicit decision as to how much risk, or how much inconvenience, you are willing to take. He believes that when you set a security standard, you must let the

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regulators enforce it, without political interference. Otherwise, industry learns that it doesn't have to comply. There must be real consequences for failures to meet the standard.

(Unc) Randol believes that while screening is the pre-eminent, but not exclusive, defense against the most likely threats to aviation security. He believes that hardening of cockpit doors was the single most necessary change to deal with the September 11th threat. He feels that the Federal Air Marshal (FAM) program is a "huge" expense with limited utility if screening is done better, so he would reduce the FAM program to closer to its pre-9/11 level and put the dollars elsewhere in aviation security.

(Unc) Randol believes attention must be focused on access controls, but that there will be industry cooperation only when they know there will be real consequences for non-compliance.

(Unc) Randol is not aware of the current TSA "Red Team" activities and, as an FSD he is troubled by that fact.

### **General Aviation**

(Unc) The only action Randol is able to take with respect to General Aviation (GA) was to send out notices keep them informed. He agrees that GA is a vulnerability. TSA is looking at the problem and it is a political issue. Randol responded favorably to a suggestion for designation of a security coordinator at each GA airport. He felt this would be "useful" but will require funding and oversight. He thinks user fees should be considered to finance such a program and that the FSD structure could manage the program.