

Military Exercises on September 11, 2001

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September 9-11, 2001: NORAD Begins Northern Vigilance Military Operation

NORAD begins Operation Northern Vigilance. For this military operation, it deploys fighters to Alaska and Northern Canada to monitor a Russian air force exercise in the Russian Arctic and North Pacific Ocean, scheduled for September 10 to September 14. The Russian exercise involves its bombers staging a mock attack against NATO planes that are supposedly planning an assault on Russia. [BBC Worldwide, 2001; Washington Times, 10/11/2001; NORAD, 10/9/2001] The NORAD fighters are due to stay in Alaska and Canada until the end of the Russian exercise. At some time between 10:32 a.m. and 11:45 a.m. on 9/11, Russian President Vladimir Putin will call the White House to say the Russians are voluntarily halting their exercise. [Washington Post, 2/27/2002] It is unknown from which bases NORAD sends fighters for Operation Northern Vigilance, and how many US military personnel are involved. However, in December 2000, it took similar action – called Operation Northern Denial – in response to a “smaller scale? Russian “long-range aviation activity in northern Russia and the Arctic.” More than 350 American and Canadian military personnel were involved on that occasion. [Canadian Chief of Defense Staff, 6/30/2001 pdf file; NORAD, 10/9/2001]

People and organizations involved: Vladimir Putin, Bush administration, Operation Northern Vigilance, North American Aerospace Defense Command

(6:30 a.m.): NORAD on Alert for Emergency Exercises

Dawne Deskins. [Source: Newhouse News/ Peter Chen/ Landov]Dawne Deskins. Lieutenant Colonel Dawne Deskins and other day shift employees at NEADS start their workday. NORAD is conducting a weeklong, large-scale exercise called Vigilant Guardian. [Newhouse News Service, 2/25/2002] Deskins is regional mission crew chief for the Vigilant Guardian exercise. [ABC News, 10/11/2002] Vigilant Guardian is described as “an exercise that would pose an imaginary crisis to North American Air Defense outposts nationwide?; as a “simulated air war?; and as “an air defense exercise simulating an attack on the United States.” According to the 9/11 Commission, it “postulated a bomber attack from the former Soviet Union.” [9/11 Commission, 8/24/2004; Filson, 2004; Newhouse News Service, 2/25/2002] Vigilant Guardian is described as being held annually, and is one of NORAD’s four major annual exercises. [Filson, 2004; GlobalSecurity (.org), 5/14/2002; Arkin, 2005] However, another report says it takes place semi-annually. [Aviation Week and Space Technology, 7/3/2002] Accounts by participants vary on whether 9/11 was the second, third, or fourth day of the exercise. [Code One Magazine, 2/2002; Ottawa Citizen, 10/11/2002; Newhouse News Service, 2/25/2002] Vigilant Guardian is a command post exercise (CPX), and in at least some previous years was conducted in conjunction with Stratcom’s Global Guardian exercise and a US Space Command exercise called Apollo Guardian. [GlobalSecurity (.org), 5/14/2002; US Congress, n.d.; Arkin, 2005] All of NORAD is participating in Vigilant Guardian on 9/11. [Aviation Week and Space Technology, 7/3/2002] At NEADS, most of the dozen or so staff on the operations floor have no idea what the exercise is going to entail and are ready for anything. [Utica Observer-Dispatch, 9/5/2004] NORAD is also running a real-world operation named Operation Northern Vigilance. NORAD is thus fully staffed and alert, and senior officers are manning stations throughout the US. The entire chain of command is in place and ready when the first hijacking is reported. An article later says, “In retrospect, the exercise would prove to be a serendipitous enabler of a rapid military response to terrorist attacks on September 11.” [Bergen Record, 1/5/2004; Aviation Week and Space Technology, 7/3/2002] Colonel Robert Marr, in charge of NEADS, says, “We had the fighters with a little more gas on board. A few more weapons on board.” [ABC News, 10/11/2002] However, Deskins and other NORAD officials later are initially confused about whether the 9/11 attacks are real or part of the exercise. There is a National Reconnaissance Office exercise planned to occur as well (see 9:00 a.m.), involving a scenario of an airplane as a flying weapon. [United Press International, 9/22/2002; Associated Press, 9/21/2002]

People and organizations involved: Dawne Deskins, North American Aerospace Defense Command, Northeast Air Defense Sector, Operation Northern Vigilance, Robert Marr, Vigilant Guardian.

Early Morning September 11, 2001: Medic Is Studying a Medical Emergency Disaster Plan for a Plane Crash at the Pentagon

Sergeant Matt Rosenberg, an army medic at the Pentagon, is studying “a new medical emergency disaster plan based on the unlikely scenario of an airplane crashing into the place.” [Washington Post, 10/16/2001] The day

before, Rosenberg later recalls in an interview with the Office of Medical History, he called the FBI with questions about who would have medical jurisdiction if such an event were to take place. "Believe it or not, the day prior to the incident, I was just on the phone with the FBI, and we were talking "so who has command should this happen, who has the medical jurisdiction, who does this, who does that," and we talked about it and talked about it, and he helped me out a lot. And then the next day, during the incident, I actually found him. He was out there on the incident that day." [Office of Medical History, 10/2004]

People and organizations involved: Federal Bureau of Investigation, Pentagon.

8:30 a.m.: Army Base Near Pentagon Holds Terrorist Attack Exercise

At Fort Belvoir, an army base 10 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, 10/5/2002] A previous MASCAL (mass casualty) training exercise was held at Fort Belvoir a little over two months earlier (see July 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, 8/5/2001]

People and organizations involved: World Trade Center, Mark Williams, Mark R. Lindon, Fort Belvoir
8:30 a.m.: FBI/CIA Anti-Terrorist Task Force Away From Washington on Training Exercise in California

USA Today reports that at this time, "a joint FBI/CIA anti-terrorist task force that specifically prepared for this type of disaster" is on a "training exercise in Monterey, Calif." Consequently, "as of late Tuesday, with airports closed around the country, the task force still [hasn't] found a way to fly back to Washington." [USA Today, 10/11/2001] The US politics website evote.com adds that the FBI has deployed "all of its anti-terrorist and top special operations agents at a training exercise (complete with all associated helicopters and light aircraft) in Monterey, California." So at the time of the attacks, "the chief federal agency responsible for preventing such crimes [is] being AWOL." [Evote [.com], 10/11/2001]

People and organizations involved: Federal Bureau of Investigation, Central Intelligence Agency
8:30 a.m.: US Military Holding "Practice Armageddon" Nationwide Training Exercise

As the 9/11 attacks are taking place, a large military training exercise called Global Guardian is said to be "in full swing." It has been going on since the previous week. [Omaha World-Herald, 10/10/2002; Omaha World-Herald, 3/27/2002] Global Guardian is an annual exercise sponsored by US Strategic Command (Stratcom) in cooperation with US Space Command and NORAD. One military author defines Stratcom as "the single US military command responsible for the day-to-day readiness of America's nuclear forces." [Arkin, 2005] Global Guardian is a global readiness exercise involving all Stratcom forces and aims to test Stratcom's ability to fight a nuclear war. It is one of many "practice Armageddons" that the US military routinely stages. [Omaha World-Herald, 10/10/2002; Associated Press, 3/21/2002; Omaha World-Herald, 3/27/2002; Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists, 12/12/1997] It links with a number of other military exercises, including Crown Vigilance (an Air Combat Command exercise), Apollo Guardian (a US Space Command exercise), and NORAD exercises Vigilant Guardian and Amalgam Warrior [ERROR (SourceType=executiveDepartmentDocument); GlobalSecurity (.org), 11/10/2002] Global Guardian is both a command post and field training exercise, and is based around a fictitious scenario designed to test the ability of Stratcom and its component forces to deter a military attack against the US. Hundreds of military personnel are involved. [Collins Center Update, 1/2000 pdf file; US Congress, n.d.; Times-Picayune, 10/8/2002] According to a 1998 Internet article by the British American Security Information Council - an independent research organization "Global Guardian is held in October or November each year. [Kristensen, 11/1998] In his book Code Names, NBC News military analyst William Arkin dates this exercise for October 22-31, 2001. [Arkin, 2005] And a military newspaper reported in March 2001 that Global Guardian was scheduled for October 2001. [Space Observer, 4/23/2001 pdf file] If this is correct, then some time after March, the exercise must have been rescheduled for early September. Furthermore, there may be another important facet to Global Guardian. A 1998 Defense Department newsletter reported that for several years Stratcom had been incorporating a computer network attack (CNA) into Global Guardian. The attack involved Stratcom "red team" members and other organizations acting as enemy agents, and included attempts to penetrate the Command using the Internet and a "bad" insider who had access to a key command and control system. The attackers "war dialed" the phones to tie them up and sent faxes to numerous fax machines throughout the Command. They also claimed they were able to shut down Stratcom's systems. Reportedly, Stratcom planned to increase the level of computer network attack in future Global Guardian exercises. [IAnewsletter, 7/1998 pdf file] It is not currently known if a computer attack was incorporated into

Global Guardian in 2001 or what its possible effects on the countrx's air defense system would have been if such an attack was part of the exercise.

People and organizations involved: US Department of Defense, North American Aerospace Defense Command, US Space Command, Global Guardian, US Strategic Command, Apollo Guardian, Amalgam Warrior, Vigilant Guardian, Crown Vigilance
8:46 a.m.: Fighters Are Training over North Carolina; Not Recalled to Washington Until Much Later

At the time of the first WTC crash, three F-16s assigned to Andrews Air Force Base, ten miles from Washington, are flying an air-to-ground training mission to drop some bombs and hit a refueling tanker, on a range in North Carolina, 207 miles away from their base. However, it is only when they are halfway back to Andrews that lead pilot Major Billy Hutchison is able to talk to the acting supervisor of flying at Andrews, Lt. Col. Phil Thompson, who tells him to return to the base "buster? (as fast as his aircraft will fly). After landing back at Andrews, Hutchison is told to take off immediately, and does so at 10:33 a.m. The other two pilots, Marc Sasseville and Heather Penney, take off from Andrews at 10:42 a.m., after having their planes loaded with 20mm training rounds. These three pilots will therefore not be patrolling the skies above Washington until after about 10:45 a.m. [Filson, 2004; Aviation Week and Space Technology, 10/9/2002] F-16s can travel at a maximum speed of 1,500 mph. [Associated Press, 7/16/2000] Traveling even at 1,100 mph (the speed NORAD Major General Larry Arnold says two fighters from Massachusetts travel toward Flight 175 [MSNBC, 10/23/2001; Slate, 2/16/2002]), at least one of these F-16s could have returned from North Carolina to Washington within ten minutes and started patrolling the skies well before 9:00 a.m.

People and organizations involved: Marc Sasseville, NBC, Phil Thompson, Heather Penney Garcia, Billy Hutchison
8:48 a.m.: Barksdale Air Force Base, Louisiana, Preparing for Global Guardian Exercise When Attacks Start

Barksdale Air Force Base in Louisiana is an important node in the US Strategic Command (Stratcom) exercise Global Guardian (see 8:30 a.m.) on 9/11. Colonel Mike Reese, director of staff for the 8th Air Force, is monitoring several television screens at the base as part of the exercise when he sees CNN cut into coverage of the first World Trade Center crash, two minutes after it happens. He watches live when the second plane hits the World Trade Center at 9:03 a.m. Reese says that at this point, "we knew it wasn't a mistake. Something grave was happening that put the nation's security at risk." An article in the New Orleans Times-Picayune later recounts how awareness of the real attacks impacts those participating in the exercise: "Immediately [the Barksdale staff's] focus turned to defense, securing Barksdale, Minot [North Dakota], and Whiteman [Missouri] air force bases, where dozens of aircraft and hundreds of personnel were involved in the readiness exercise "Global Guardian." The exercise abruptly ended as the United States appeared to be at war within its own borders. Four A-10s, an aircraft not designed for air-to-air combat, from Barksdale's 47th Fighter Squadron, were placed on "cockpit alert," the highest state of readiness for fighter pilots. Within five minutes, the A-10s, equipped only with high intensity cannons, could have been launched to destroy unfriendly aircraft, even if it was a civilian passenger airliner." Lt. Col. Edmund Walker, commander of the 47th Fighter Squadron, a novice pilot still in training, is sitting in his fighter along with other pilots in other fighters, ready to take off, when they are ordered back to the squadron office. They are told they are no longer practicing. Walker recalls, "We had to defend the base against any aircraft, airliner or civilian. We had no idea. Would it fly to the base and crash into the B-52s or A-10s on the flight line"? [Times-Picayune, 10/8/2002] When President Bush's Air Force One takes off from Sarasota, Florida, at approximately 9:55 a.m., it has no destination, and circles over Florida aimlessly. But around 10:35 (see (10:35 a.m.)), it begins heading towards Barksdale Air Force Base. [CBS News, 10/11/2002; Washington Post, 2/27/2002] It finally arrives at Barksdale around 11:45 a.m. [CBS News, 10/11/2002; Daily Telegraph, 1/16/2002] It's never been explained exactly why Bush traveled from Florida to Barksdale. The Daily Telegraph has reported, "The official reason for landing at Barksdale was that President Bush felt it necessary to make a further statement, but it isn't unreasonable to assume that?as there was no agreement as to what the President's movements should be - it was felt he might as well be on the ground as in the air." [Daily Telegraph, 1/16/2002]

People and organizations involved: Offutt Air Force Base, James O. Ellis Jr, Global Guardian, Mike Reese, Eni
Before 9:00 a.m.: Army Base Outside New York Prepares for Terrorist Attack Exercise

Staff at Fort Monmouth, an Army base in New Jersey located about 50 miles south of New York City, is preparing to hold a "disaster drill? to test emergency response capabilities to a fake chemical attack. The exercise, called Timely Alert II, is to involve various law enforcement agencies and emergency personnel, including Fort Monmouth firefighters and members of the New Jersey State Police. Personnel are to be deployed and measures taken as in a real emergency. A notice has been sent out, warning that anyone not conducting official business will be turned away from Fort Monmouth during the exercise. Soon after 9 a.m., the exercise director tells a group of participating volunteers that a hijacked plane has crashed into the World Trade Center. The participants pretend to be upset, believing this is just part of the simulation. When they see the live televised footage of the WTC attacks, some people at the base think it is an elaborate training video to accompany the exercise. One worker tells a fire department training officer: "You really outdid yourself this

time." Interestingly, the follow-up exercise held in July 2002 (Timely Alert III) does incorporate simulated television news reports to give participants the impression that the emergency is real. And in the first Timely Alert exercise, held on the base in January 2001, a call had come through of a supposed "real" bomb situation, but this "fortunately turned out to be a report related to a training aid being used during the exercise." On 9/11, Fort Monmouth is geared to go into high-alert status as part of Timely Alert II. The exercise is called off once the base is alerted to the real attacks. [Monmouth Message, 3/9/2001; Hub, 10/21/2001; Asbury Park Press, 8/24/2002; Monmouth Message, 10/12/2003; US Department of the Army, 8/26/2003; Monmouth Message, 9/23/2002; Monmouth Message, 10/21/2001] Fort Monmouth is home to various Army, Defense Department, and other government agencies. The largest of these is the US Army's Communications-Electronics Command (CECOM). CECOM serves to "develop, acquire, field, and sustain superior information technologies and integrated systems for American warfighters." It is tasked with the "critical role of command, control, communications, computers, intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance (C4ISR)." [Army, 2/2003 pdf file; GlobalSecurity (.org), 9/2/2004; Communications-Electronics Command, 5/17/2002] Fort Monmouth services also directly assist in the emergency response later in the day. Its fire department deploys to Atlantic Highlands to assist passengers coming from Manhattan by ferry, and members of its Patterson Army Health Clinic are also sent out to help. Teams of CECOM experts from the base are later deployed to ground zero in New York with equipment capable of locating cellular phone transmissions within the ruins of the collapsed World Trade Center. Its explosive ordnance company is also deployed to assist authorities should they come across anything they think might be explosives, while digging through the debris in search of victims. [Monmouth Message, 10/21/2001; Hub, 10/21/2001]

People and organizations involved: Fort Monmouth, Timely Alert II, Army's Communications-Electronics Command, World Trade Center.

Before 9:00 a.m.: Offutt Air Force Base, Nebraska, is Directing Global Guardian Training Exercise

Admiral Richard Mies. [Source: Public domain] Admiral Richard Mies. Offutt Air Force Base, near Omaha, Nebraska, appears to be the headquarters of the US Strategic Command (Stratcom) exercise Global Guardian that is "in full swing" when the 9/11 attacks begin. At least the director of the exercise, Admiral Richard Mies, commander in chief of Stratcom, is at Offutt this morning. [Omaha World-Herald, 10/10/2002] Because of Global Guardian, bombers, missile crews, and submarines around America are all being directed from Stratcom's Command Center, a steel and concrete reinforced bunker below Offutt. [BBC, 10/1/2002; Omaha World-Herald, 3/27/2002; Associated Press, 3/21/2002; Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists, 12/12/1997; Omaha World-Herald, 10/10/2002] This bunker is staffed with top personnel and they are at a heightened security mode because of the exercise. [Associated Press, 3/21/2002; Air Force Weather Observer, 8/2002] Because of Global Guardian, three special military command aircraft with sophisticated communications equipment, based at Offutt, are up in the air the morning of 9/11. These E-4B National Airborne Operations Center planes?nicknamed "Doomsday" planes during the Cold War?are intended to control nuclear forces from the air in times of crisis. They are capable of acting as alternative command posts for top government officials from where they can direct US forces, execute war orders and coordinate the actions of civil authorities in times of national emergency. The Federal Advisory Committee (whose chairman is retired Lt. Gen. Brent Scowcroft) is aboard one of these Doomsday planes, being brought to Offutt to observe the exercise. Media accounts indicate Global Guardian is cancelled at Offutt shortly after the second WTC tower is hit (at 9:03 a.m.), with staff switching to "real-world mode." [Omaha World-Herald, 10/8/2002; Air Force Weather Observer, 8/2002; US Department of Defense, 2/9/2002] However, even after Global Guardian is called off, the three E-4Bs remain airborne. [BBC, 10/1/2002; Omaha World-Herald, 3/27/2002] Also, the morning of 9/11, a small group of business leaders are at Offutt Air Force Base for a charity fundraiser event due to take place there later in the day, hosted by the multi-billionaire Warren Buffett. When the attacks begin, these visitors are having breakfast with Admiral Mies, the director of Global Guardian. After the second WTC tower is hit, Mies excuses himself from the group, presumably to assist in canceling the exercise. [Omaha World-Herald, 10/10/2002; Omaha World-Herald, 3/27/2002; San Francisco Business Times, 3/1/2002]

People and organizations involved: Warren Buffet, Federal Advisory Committee, Brent Scowcroft, Richard Mies, Global Guardian.

Just Before 9:00 a.m.: Two Otis Fighters Take Off for Training Mission Over Ocean

A team in the 102nd Fighter Wing at Otis Air National Guard Base, Cape Cod, Massachusetts, finishes loading dummy missiles onto two fighters that are going to fly a training mission over the Atlantic. They take off sometime before the second WTC tower is hit. Shortly after that hit, the fighters on the training mission are recalled. The implication is that the fighters are then refitted with actual weapons instead of dummy ones. [Cape Cod Times, 10/8/2002] Otis is the base from which the two F-15s launch in response to the first hijacking (Flight 11) at roughly the same time. [9/11 Commission, 7/17/2004] One of the pilots of these F-15s?nicknamed "Nasty" "is reportedly standing in for the usual "alert" pilot, who is "scheduled for training" that 9/11. [Cape Cod Times, 9/21/2002]

9:00 a.m.: 9/11-Styled Simulation Cancelled

An "emergency response exercise" is scheduled to take place at 9 a.m. the morning of 9/11, involving the simulated crash of a small corporate jet plane into a government building. The exercise is to be conducted by the National Reconnaissance Office (NRO) in Chantilly, Virginia – just four miles from Washington Dulles International Airport, from where Flight 77 took off, and 24 miles from the Pentagon. The NRO draws its personnel from the CIA and the military. The exercise is to involve the jet experiencing mechanical problems then crashing into one of the four towers at the NRO. In order to simulate the damage from the crash, some stairwells and exits are to be closed off, forcing NRO employees to find other ways to evacuate the building. However, according to an agency spokesman, "as soon as the real world events began, we cancelled the exercise." After the attacks, most of the agency's 3,000 staff are supposedly sent home. [United Press International, 9/22/2002; Associated Press, 9/21/2002; National Law Enforcement and Security Institute, 9/6/2002]

People and organizations involved: National Reconnaissance Office.

After 9:03 a.m.: NORAD Training Exercise Cancelled

NORAD Commander Larry Arnold later says that after Flight 175 hits the South Tower, "I thought it might be prudent to pull out of the exercise [presumably Vigilant Guardian (see (6:30 a.m.))], which we did." He says: "As we pulled out of the exercise we were getting calls about United Flight 93 and we were worried about that." Some early accounts say the military receives notification of the possible hijacking of Flight 93 at around 9:16 a.m. [9/11 Commission, 6/23/2003; CNN, 10/17/2001] However, the 9/11 Commission later claims that the military first receives a call about Flight 93 at 10:07 a.m. [9/11 Commission, 7/17/2004] Larry Arnold adds, "Then we had another call from Boston Center about a possible hijacking, but that turned out to be the airplane that had already hit the South Tower but we didn't know that at the time." [Filson, 2004]

People and organizations involved: North American Aerospace Defense Command, Larry Arnold.

(9:09 a.m. and After): Numerous False Reports of Hijacked Aircraft

According to the 9/11 Commission, "During the course of the morning, there were multiple erroneous reports of hijacked aircraft in the system." [9/11 Commission, 7/17/2004] Around 9:09 a.m., the FAA Command Center reports that 11 aircraft are either not communicating with FAA facilities or flying unexpected routes. [Aviation Week and Space Technology, 7/3/2002] NORAD's Major General Larry Arnold claims that during the "four-hour ordeal" of the attacks, a total of 21 planes are identified as possible hijackings. [Code One Magazine, 2/2002; Filson, 2004] Robert Marr, head of NEADS on 9/11, says, "At one time I was told that across the nation there were some 29 different reports of hijackings." [Newhouse News Service, 5/1/2005] It is later claimed that these false reports cause considerable chaos. Larry Arnold says that particularly during the time between the Pentagon being hit at 9:37 and Flight 93 going down at around 10:06, "a number of aircraft are being called possibly hijacked? There was a lot of confusion, as you can imagine." [Filson, 2004; Filson, 2004] He says, "We were receiving many reports of hijacked aircraft. When we received those calls, we might not know from where the aircraft had departed. We also didn't know the location of the airplane." [Code One Magazine, 2/2002] According to Robert Marr, "There were a number of false reports out there. What was valid? What was a guess? We just didn't know." [Filson, 2004]

People and organizations involved: Robert Marr, Larry Arnold, Federal Aviation Administration.

9:28 a.m.: NORAD Possibly Holding "Live-Fly? Training Exercise

According to former counterterrorism "tsar" Richard Clarke, around this time the acting Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Richard Myers tells him via video link: "We are in the middle of Vigilant Warrior, a NORAD exercise, but ... Otis [Air National Guard Base] has launched two birds toward New York." [Clarke, 2004] However, no other references have been found to this exercise, "Vigilant Warrior." Considering that exercise terms are "normally an unclassified nickname," [Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, 5/23/1998 pdf file] this is perhaps a little odd. Could Richard Clarke have mistakenly been referring to the Vigilant Guardian exercise (see (6:30 a.m.)), which is taking place on 9/11? According to a later news report though, NORAD confirms that "it was running two mock drills on Sept. 11 at various radar sites and Command Centers in the United States and Canada," one of these being Vigilant Guardian. [New Jersey Star-Ledger, 1/5/2004] If this is correct then there must be another NORAD exercise on 9/11. If not "Vigilant Warrior," a possibility is that the exercise referred to by Richard Clarke is in fact "Amalgam Warrior," which is a NORAD-sponsored, large-scale, live-fly air defense and air intercept field training exercise. Amalgam Warrior usually involves two or more NORAD regions and is held twice yearly, in the spring for the West Coast and in the autumn for the East Coast. [GlobalSecurity (.org), 5/14/2002; Airman, 1996; US Congress, n.d.; Arkin, 2005] Is it possible that in 2001 the East Coast Amalgam Warrior is being held earlier than usual (like Global Guardian (see 8:30 a.m.)) and is taking place on 9/11? In support of this possibility is a 1997 Defense Department report that describes the Stratcom exercise Global Guardian, saying it "links with other exercise activities sponsored by the Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff, and the Unified Commands." The exercises it links with are Crown Vigilance (an Air Combat Command exercise),

Apollo Guardian (a US Space Command exercise), and significantly the NORAD exercises Vigilant Guardian and Amalgam Warrior. [ERROR (SourceType=executiveDepartmentDocument); GlobalSecurity (.org), 11/10/2002] Since in 2001, Vigilant Guardian (see (6:30 a.m.)) is occurring the same time as Global Guardian, might Amalgam Warrior be as well? In his book Code Names, William Arkin says that Amalgam Warrior is "sometimes combined with Global Guardian." [Arkin, 2005] Amalgam Warrior tests such activities as tracking, surveillance, air interception, employing rules of engagement, attack assessment, electronic warfare, and counter-cruise-missile operations. A previous Amalgam Warrior in 1996 involved such situations as tracking unknown aircraft that had incorrectly filed their flight plans or wandered off course, in-flight emergencies, terrorist aircraft attacks, and large-scale bomber strike missions. Amalgam Warrior 98-1 was NORAD's largest ever exercise and involved six B-1B bombers being deployed to Eielson Air Force Base, Alaska, to act as an enemy threat by infiltrating the aerial borders of North America. [GlobalSecurity (.org), 5/14/2002; Airman, 1996; Arkin, 2005] Another Amalgam Warrior in fall 2000 similarly involved four B-1 bombers acting as enemy forces trying to invade Alaska, with NORAD going from tracking the unknown aircraft to sending up "alert? F-15s in response. [Eielson News Service, 11/27/2000; Associated Press, 11/29/2000] If either one (or both) of these exercises ending with the name "Warrior? is taking place on 9/11, this could be very significant, because the word "Warrior? indicates that the exercise is a Joint Chiefs of Staff-approved, Commander in Chief, NORAD-sponsored field training exercise. [North American Aerospace Defense Command, 9/25/1989] Real planes would be pretending to be threats to the US and real fighters would be deployed to defend against them.

People and organizations involved: Richard B. Myers, US Department of Defense, Richard A. Clarke, North American Aerospace Defense Command, Vigilant Guardian, Amalgam Warrior, Ellington Air National Guard Base

Before 9:37 a.m.: 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. [First Due News, 5/1703; US Department of Health and Human Services, 8/2002; JEMS, 5/2002; MDW News Service, 11/4/2001; Pentagram, 12/2/2001] 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, 10/14/2001]

People and organizations involved: Fort Myer, Pentagon

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

While President Bush is still in Sarasota, an AWACS (Airborne Warning and Control System plane) is flying a training mission off the coast of Florida. Referring to the AWACS plane, NORAD Commander Larry Arnold later says: "I had set up an arrangement with their wing commander at Tinker [Air Force Base, Oklahoma] some months earlier for us to divert their AWACS off a normal training mission to go into an exercise scenario simulating an attack on the United States. The AWACS crew initially thought we were going into one of those simulations." Another AWACS is also flying a training mission, near Washington, DC, the morning of 9/11. [Code One Magazine, 2/2002]

People and organizations involved: Larry Arnold
After 9:55 a.m.: Ellington Fighters Airborne on Local Training Mission

Two F-16s from the 147th Fighter Wing, Ellington Air National Guard Base, Texas, are said to be already airborne on a local training mission when they are instructed to escort Air Force One after it departs Sarasota, Florida, with President Bush on board. [Code One Magazine, 2/2002; American Defender, 1/2002]

People and organizations involved: 147th Fighter Wing, George W. Bush, Ellington Air National Guard Base
2:50 p.m.: Bush Arrives in Nebraska; Enters Strategic Command Center

Having left Barksdale Air Force Base, Louisiana at around 1:30 p.m. (see (1:30 p.m.)), Air Force One lands at Offutt Air Force Base near Omaha, Nebraska. President Bush stays on the plane for about ten minutes before entering the United States Strategic Command bunker at 3:06 p.m. [Salon, 10/12/2001; Daily Telegraph, 1/16/2002] Offutt Air Force Base appears to be the headquarters of the US Strategic Command (Stratcom) exercise Global Guardian that was "in full swing" at the time the attacks began (see 8:30 a.m.). While there, the president spends time in the underground Command Center from where Global Guardian was earlier being directed, being brought up to date on the attacks and their aftermath. [Washington Times, 11/8/2002; Omaha World-Herald, 3/27/2002; Daily Telegraph, 1/16/2002]

People and organizations involved: George W. Bush, Offutt Air Force Base