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## 'Real-World or Exercise': Did the U.S. Military Mistake the 9/11 Attacks for a Training Scenario?

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NEADS Training exercises Vigilant Guardian



*"I've never seen so much real-world stuff happen during an exercise."*  
- Major James Fox, Northeast Air Defense Sector, September 11, 2001

Key military personnel who were responsible for protecting the U.S. against the 9/11 attacks may have been seriously hindered in their ability to respond because of a large-scale air defense exercise they were participating in when the attacks occurred. Evidence indicates that the personnel, whose responsibilities included ordering fighter jets into the air to intercept the hijacked planes, were unclear about what was "real-world" and what was "exercise." They may have been led to believe that the terrorist attacks were just simulated scenarios.

These individuals worked at the Northeast Air Defense Sector (NEADS) in Rome, New York. Audio recordings of the operations floor at NEADS reveal staffers suggesting that the catastrophic events of September 11, 2001 could have been part of the exercise. They sometimes even made jokes and laughed about what was taking place, further indicating that they were mistaking actual events for exercise simulations. Even senior commanding officers have admitted wondering if the terrorist attacks were part of the exercise.

And while staffers sometimes apparently made clear that an event was unconnected to the exercise by referring to it as being "real-world," there is evidence that the term "real-world" may in fact be a way to describe live events played out within an exercise, perhaps involving real aircraft getting airborne, rather than just hypothetical scenarios.

Furthermore, NEADS personnel previously participated in exercises that included scenarios resembling the 9/11 attacks, such as plane hijackings and aircraft being crashed into skyscrapers in New York, and this could have increased the likelihood that they would mistake the events of September 11 for exercise simulations.

Although much remains speculative, the available evidence raises serious questions about whether the exercise at NEADS on September 11 was a deliberate tactic used to hinder skilled and dedicated professionals, thereby preventing them from stopping the terrorist attacks.

### NORAD'S 'SIMULATED AIR WAR' ON SEPTEMBER 11

A key agency responsible for protecting the U.S. from an airborne attack, like what happened on September 11, is NORAD, the North American Aerospace Defense Command. NORAD is the military organization responsible for monitoring and defending the airspace over the United States and Canada. Within the U.S., it is divided into three sectors. The 9/11 attacks took place in the airspace monitored by its Northeast Air Defense Sector, NEADS. It was therefore personnel at NEADS who were responsible for trying to coordinate the U.S. military's response to the hijackings. These individuals, however, were in the middle of a major training exercise when the attacks began.

"Vigilant Guardian" was an annual exercise conducted by NORAD that was several days underway on September 11. All of NORAD took part in it. [1] Vigilant Guardian has been described as a "simulated air war" and as "an air defense exercise simulating an attack on the United States." [2] Remarkably, it was scheduled to include a simulated hijacking at around 9:40 a.m. on September 11. The exercise "was designed to run a range of

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scenarios" that day, according to *Vanity Fair*, "including a 'traditional' simulated hijack in which politically motivated perpetrators commandeer an aircraft, land on a Cuba-like island, and seek asylum." [3]

It has been claimed that Vigilant Guardian was terminated shortly after United Airlines Flight 175 became the second plane to crash into the World Trade Center, at 9:03 a.m. on September 11. [4] However, evidence indicates it may have continued long after that time. It has also been claimed that the participation of military staffers in the exercise had little effect on their ability to protect America against the attacks, and that Vigilant Guardian may even have had beneficial effects. For example, in its final report, the 9/11 Commission claimed that the response to the attacks "was, if anything, expedited by the increased number of staff at the sectors and at NORAD because of the scheduled exercise." [5] However, a significant amount of evidence casts doubt upon this claim.

#### **NEADS STAFFERS THOUGHT ATTACKS WERE PART OF THE EXERCISE**

From the outset, personnel at NEADS wondered if reports they received about the 9/11 attacks were part of the exercise. Their first notification of the crisis came just before 8:38 a.m. on September 11, when Joseph Cooper, an air traffic controller at the FAA's Boston Center, called NEADS and reported, "We have a hijacked aircraft headed towards New York, and ... we need someone to scramble some F-16s or something up there, help us out." The response of Technical Sergeant Jeremy Powell, who answered the call, was to ask, "Is this real-world or exercise?" Cooper replied, "No, this is not an exercise, not a test." [6] According to *Vanity Fair*, "Powell, like almost everyone in the room, first assumes the phone call is from the simulations team on hand to send 'inputs'--simulated scenarios--into play for the day's training exercise." [7]

However, despite Cooper's statement that the hijacking was "not an exercise, not a test," NEADS personnel continued to question whether information they received about the attacks was real or just simulation. For example, at 9:03 a.m., NEADS received a phone call informing it that a second aircraft had been hijacked, and personnel also saw the live television coverage of the second plane, Flight 175, crashing into the World Trade Center. A minute or two later, recordings of the operations floor reveal, several members of staff discussed these developments among themselves. One of them asked, "Is this explosion part of that that we're looking at now on TV?" Someone replied: "Yes. And there's a possible second hijack also--a United Airlines." Another person then commented, "I think this is a damn input, to be honest." An "input" is a simulations input, as part of a training exercise. Someone else said, "Then this is a damned messed-up input." [8]

It is unclear whether, on this occasion, when the NEADS personnel mentioned an "input," they were suggesting that the second hijacking was simulated, or they thought it possible that the television coverage of the attack on the WTC was simulated video footage, intended to make the exercise more realistic. What is remarkable, either way, is that at a time when it should have been obvious to them that the U.S. was in the middle of a major terrorist attack, these key personnel were uncertain whether what was happening was real or simulated.

#### **NEADS PERSONNEL THOUGHT THE EXERCISE WAS CONTINUING, WELL AFTER THE ATTACKS BEGAN**

Although it has been claimed that Vigilant Guardian was terminated shortly after Flight 175 hit the WTC, evidence shows that NEADS personnel thought it was continuing after that time, and wondered whether subsequent events were part of the exercise.

At 9:09 a.m., one of the NEADS ID technicians complained, "I hope they cancel the exercise, because this is ridiculous." [9] Then at 9:15 a.m., an off-duty member of staff called in and asked someone in the ID section about the exercise. They said, "I've been watching [the news] for about 10 minutes, and I said, 'I wonder if they're, did they suspend the exercise?'" The person at NEADS answered, "Not at this time, no, but I think they're going to." He then laughed and added, "I don't know." [10]

If the exercise was still being conducted at 9:15 a.m., as this call indicated, the question arises as to why it had not been canceled. If NORAD and/or NEADS personnel were clear that the terrorist attacks were real, rather than simulated, surely those in command should have called off the exercise well before this time. If, alternatively, the exercise had already been terminated, why were those on the NEADS operations floor allowed to think it was still taking place?

The confusion continued. At around 9:20 a.m., one of the ID technicians commented, "This was pre-planned, I bet you, for 9 o'clock." A colleague of hers replied, "Oh, I bet you it was." [11] It is unclear exactly what these staffers were talking about. But it seems possible they were referring to actual events that they mistakenly thought were simulated. They thought these events had been "pre-planned" by those who designed the exercise.

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Remarkably, there was uncertainty over whether the exercise was still taking place more than 45 minutes later. At 10:08 a.m., Master Sergeant Joe McCain, the mission crew commander technician, responded to Master Sergeant Maureen Dooley, the leader of the ID section, after she provided details of a bomb that was being reported on United Airlines Flight 93, the fourth hijacked plane, which supposedly crashed in Pennsylvania that morning. McCain commented, "If this is an exercise input, this is a good one." [12] (As previously mentioned, an "input" is a scenario simulated for the exercise.) In other words, several minutes after Flight 93 crashed, and the terrorist attacks were effectively over, someone at NEADS still considered it possible that information about the attacks was part of the exercise.

#### **COMMANDERS THOUGHT HIJACKING WAS PART OF THE EXERCISE**

Even some of the most senior officers at NORAD and NEADS have admitted mistaking actual events for part of Vigilant Guardian. Colonel Robert Marr, the battle commander at NEADS on September 11, has recalled that when he saw personnel on the operations floor huddled together after they learned of the first hijacking, he assumed it was related to the exercise. Presumably based on an interview with Marr, author Lynn Spencer described that moment, writing: "Marr has participated in enough training missions to know this is something out of the ordinary. Clearly, he thinks, the simex [simulated exercise] is kicking off with a lively, unexpected twist. ... His bet is that his simulations team has started off the exercise by throwing out a 'heart attack card' to see how the troops respond to a first-aid call from a fellow soldier, testing their first responder training." [13]

Major General Larry Arnold, the commander of the Continental United States NORAD Region on September 11, has recalled that when he was informed of the first hijacking, the first thing he thought was: "Is this part of the exercise? Is this some kind of a screw-up?" [14] He explained, "Because quite honestly, and frankly, we do do hijacking scenarios as we go through these exercises from time to time." [15]

According to Spencer, Arnold was "not privy to everything concerning the exercise." Vigilant Guardian was "meant to test commanders also, to make sure that their war machine is operating as it should." [16] Marr has similarly commented that despite his senior position at NEADS, "You just never knew really what was going to happen in those exercises." [17]

#### **OFFICER WHO HELPED DESIGN EXERCISE MISTOOK ATTACKS FOR SIMULATION**

Another officer who, despite his senior position, apparently mistook the 9/11 attacks for an exercise simulation was Major Kevin Nasypany. Nasypany was the mission crew commander at NEADS on September 11, and in that role, according to Marr, was "basically in charge of the entire operations floor." Nasypany, Marr said, was "the most senior guy on the floor." [18] Furthermore, Nasypany had helped design the exercise taking place that day.

And yet, Nasypany has said, "When they told me there was a hijack, my first reaction was, 'Somebody started the exercise early.'" Nasypany knew that the exercise was scheduled to include a simulated hijacking, and so, he recalled, he "actually said out loud, 'The hijack's not supposed to be for another hour.'" [19]

Additionally, audio recordings reveal that at around 9:00 a.m. on September 11, Nasypany joked with his colleagues about what happened when NEADS was alerted to the first hijacking, of American Airlines Flight 11. He said: "And where was I? I was on the shitter!" He continued, "When I heard, it was like, 'Oh my God!'" He added, "I knew that was an exercise." [20]

If Nasypany--"the most senior guy on the floor"--was openly suggesting that actual events were part of the exercise, then surely members of staff under his command could have mistakenly thought they were dealing with simulated scenarios.

#### **NEADS PERSONNEL JOKED ABOUT THE ATTACKS**

Further evidence that NEADS personnel mistook actual events for simulation, as part of the exercise, is the inappropriate emotions some of them exhibited in response to the hijackings and other aspects of the terrorist attacks. Staffers sometimes reacted in a light-hearted manner, and even joked openly about the catastrophic events taking place.

For example, recordings of the operations floor reveal that at 8:57 a.m., around 20 minutes after NEADS was alerted to the first hijacking, Kevin Nasypany was discussing the first plane hitting the World Trade Center with a colleague. He then joked, "Think we put the exercise on a hold, what do you think?" and laughed heartily. [21]

A number of staffers joked about the day's events just after NEADS was informed that a second plane had been hijacked, at 9:03 a.m. One staff member announced to his colleagues: "Okay guys, listen up. Possibly a second hijack." One of them responded,

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"Bring it on." The person that announced the possible hijacking then added that the hijacked plane was "United Air." In response, a colleague said: "That's it. I'm not flying with United or American [Airlines] anymore."

The men then started joking among themselves. One of them commented: "I'll say they're all supposed to be on the same plane. They just got mixed up." (Presumably he was talking about the hijackers.) In response, another of the men laughed and said, "Half of them got on one plane, the other half ..." One man commented, "I never thought I would have wished for ValuJet to come back," and another laughed and replied, "I'm still not wishing for ValuJet." A couple of minutes later, one of the men said, "I'm glad I'm not flying today," and then laughed. One of his colleagues replied: "Don't worry, Jim. We'll carjack you on the way home." [22]

Such jovial conversation would have been extraordinary if these men realized that the U.S. was in the middle of the worst terrorist attack in its history. Their behavior would, however, be more understandable if they mistakenly thought the information they had been given about hijackings and planes crashing into the World Trade Center was part of the exercise.

One more such incident occurred at 9:47 a.m., after Jeremy Powell called a military unit to inform it of the possible hijacking of another aircraft, Delta Airlines Flight 1989, and said that NEADS needed "somebody airborne." (The suspicion that this flight had been hijacked turned out to be mistaken.) After he ended the call, Powell or someone else at NEADS, presumably referring to the suspected hijacking, joked, "Are you sure this isn't an exercise?" and then laughed. [23]

#### **NEADS PERSONNEL INDICATED THAT 'REAL-WORLD' REFERRED TO LIVE-FLY EXERCISE EVENTS**

Often, recordings reveal, NEADS personnel appeared to make clear that an event was unrelated to the exercise by referring to it as being "real-world" or "live-world." However, there is evidence that their use of the term "real-world" meant something different.

We know that when NORAD holds what is called a "live-fly" exercise, this will involve actual civilian planes and military fighters getting airborne, instead of just being simulated. [24] For example, a NORAD exercise called "Amalgam Virgo 02" that was held in June 2002 involved a Delta Airlines Boeing 757 and a Navy C-9 taking to the air to act as hijacked planes. Furthermore, FBI agents and members of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police played the parts of the hijackers on the planes, and military personnel acted as the civilian passengers. [25]

Some evidence indicates that when NEADS personnel used the term "real-world" on September 11, they were referring to a particular event being part of the exercise. But they meant that they thought it was being played out live, like the hijackings in Amalgam Virgo 02, rather than just simulated.

Lieutenant Colonel Dawne Deskins, the aircraft control and warning officer at NEADS on September 11, supported this possibility when she was interviewed by the 9/11 Commission in October 2003. She said that, before 9/11, when NEADS held exercises that included simulated plane hijackings, it "would not do these hijack exercises real-world." Instead, it "had a cell that would play the FAA in the exercise." Deskins commented that "there really were not the assets to do a large-scale real-world exercise to practice hijack response." [26]

Major James Fox, the leader of the NEADS weapons team on September 11, similarly told the 9/11 Commission that he did "not recall any real-world, actual flying exercises coordinated with FAA to practice hijack procedures." He added, "Any live exercises would happen over the off-coast airspaces." [27] Both Fox and Deskins, therefore, appear to have taken the term "real-world" to be a way of describing an exercise that includes live-fly activities.

#### **NEADS OFFICER HAD 'NEVER SEEN SO MUCH REAL-WORLD STUFF HAPPEN DURING AN EXERCISE'**

Recordings of the NEADS operations floor show personnel apparently taking the term "real-world" to be a reference to live-fly exercise events while the 9/11 attacks were taking place. For example, in the ID section, technicians Stacia Rountree, Shelley Watson, and Maureen Dooley overheard Jeremy Powell on the phone with the FAA's Boston Center, being notified of the first hijacking. Rountree reacted to the news by saying, "Is that real-world?" Dooley answered, "Real-world hijack." Watson then reacted as if she were pleased at this news, exclaiming, "Cool!" [28]

In a recent documentary, Dooley gave an explanation for her colleague's apparently inappropriate reaction. She claimed that Watson said "Cool!" because a hijacking "was usually not something that was very devastating." [29] However, might the reason for

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Watson's reaction have been that she thought the hijacking was part of the exercise, but, as it was a "real-world hijack," she thought it involved a real plane playing the hijacked aircraft, which meant NEADS had the opportunity to launch real fighter jets in response to it? Watson was therefore looking forward to dealing with a live-fly exercise event.

Minutes after this incident, at 8:43 a.m., while NEADS personnel were busy responding to the reported hijacking of Flight 11, James Fox commented, "I've never seen so much real-world stuff happen during an exercise." [30] Here again it seems that the term "real-world" was being used as a reference to live events within an exercise, rather than to actual, non-exercise events.

Robert Marr, too, appears to have understood "real-world" to be a term that is used to describe a live-fly exercise event. When he saw personnel on the operations floor gathered around a radar scope after they learned of the first hijacking, Marr sent Dawne Deskins to find out what was happening. [31] After Deskins then learned about the hijacking, she returned to the NEADS battle cab and reportedly told Marr: "It's a hijacking, and this is real life, not part of the exercise." According to the account of Lynn Spencer, which was presumably based on an interview with Marr, Marr then thought: "This is an interesting start to the exercise. This 'real-world' mixed in with today's simex will keep them on their toes." [32]

### **EXERCISE RESEMBLED 9/11 IN DAYS BEFORE ATTACKS**

Some aspects of Vigilant Guardian that NEADS personnel had been dealing with in the days just before September 11 bore a remarkable resemblance to the situation these personnel were faced with when the 9/11 attacks occurred. This similarity could surely have increased the likelihood that the events of September 11 would be mistaken for exercise simulations.

For example, on September 9 Vigilant Guardian included a scenario in which terrorists hijacked a large commercial jet plane and threatened to use it for an attack on New York. In the scenario, members of a terrorist group armed with explosives were on a regular United Airlines flight from London, England, to New York, with the intention of detonating their explosives over New York. After the fictitious terrorists realized their plane had been diverted and was nowhere near New York, they detonated their explosives, leaving no survivors. [33] Considering the similarity between this scenario and the 9/11 attacks (terrorists on a commercial jet plane, planning an airborne attack on New York), might NEADS personnel have mistakenly thought the attacks on September 11 were a follow-up to this simulation?

### **MOCK AIR TRAFFIC CONTROLLER IN EXERCISE USED NAME OF KEY CONTROLLER WHO RESPONDED TO 9/11 ATTACKS**

Another remarkable aspect of Vigilant Guardian is that in the days just before September 11, the actor playing the air traffic controller who gave NEADS information about the simulated events said their name was "Colin Scoggins," even though it was unusual for a mock controller to give their name during an exercise. And then, on September 11, the real Colin Scoggins--an employee at the FAA's Boston Center--happened to be the key person calling NEADS with information about the actual attacks, even though it was not his usual role to perform such a duty. This curious apparent coincidence could surely have made it more likely that NEADS personnel would mistake the 9/11 attacks for part of the exercise.

Colin Scoggins was the Boston Center's military operations specialist. [34] He was responsible for managing operating agreements between the Boston Center and the military, and consequently had personal relationships with most military units in the region. [35]

In the two days before 9/11, an actor playing Scoggins in the exercise made calls to NEADS, giving it information about the simulated events. Recordings from the operations floor reveal, for example, that shortly before 10:00 a.m. on September 9, NEADS was called by the actor, who said his name was "Colin Scoggins." The actor said a group called the "Palan Resistance Movement" had two of its members on United Airlines Flight 558, a flight out of London, who intended to detonate a bomb over New York City.

The real Colin Scoggins has confirmed that the voice of the person calling himself "Colin Scoggins" on this occasion was not his. Scoggins suggested that the NEADS simulation cell used his name in the exercise probably because he was a known contact at the Boston Center. Scoggins also said it was unusual for NEADS to use a specific name like this in an exercise, and added that the actor should have just referred to himself as being from the Boston Center. [36]

### **CONTROLLER WAS 'THE ONLY ONE' GIVING NEADS INFORMATION DURING 9/11 ATTACKS**

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While an actor calling himself "Colin Scoggins" gave NEADS information about simulated exercise events in the two days before 9/11, apparently by coincidence, the real Colin Scoggins served as a key liaison between the Boston Center and NEADS on September 11. Scoggins has said he made "about 40" phone calls to NEADS that day. [37] Robert Marr said Scoggins was in fact "about the only one that was feeding us information [during the attacks]. I don't know exactly where he got it. But he was feeding us information as much as he could." [38] According to Lynn Spencer, other than the calls from Scoggins, NEADS's only source of information on the hijacked planes was "the coverage on CNN." [39]

And yet Scoggins would not normally have been performing the role of keeping NEADS updated with relevant information, as he did on September 11. Daniel Bueno, the traffic management supervisor at the Boston Center, told the 9/11 Commission that as a military operations specialist, Scoggins was "usually not on the [air traffic control] floor." [40] Scoggins has said that he didn't "normally sit at that position"--manning the military desk at the Boston Center--"but I write all the procedures for it. So I understand the position probably better than anybody else who works the position." [41]

After arriving at the Boston Center at around 8:25 a.m. and being told by a colleague that a plane had been hijacked, Scoggins in fact first headed to the center's in-house credit union rather than to the operational floor, because, he has said, "when hijacks do occur, sometimes too many people try to get involved but instead they just get in the way." [42] However, shortly after he arrived, Scoggins has recalled that Bueno "asked me to come downstairs and sit at the military desk if I could." [43]

Therefore the unlikely and unusual situation arose that during the exercise on September 9 and September 10, and also during the attacks on September 11, NEADS was given key information by someone calling himself Colin Scoggins. The question arises as to whether this created any confusion during the 9/11 attacks, causing some NEADS personnel to think information coming from the real Colin Scoggins was part of the exercise. While the person answering calls from Scoggins on September 11 may have recognized that the caller had a different voice to the actor playing Scoggins on the previous days, other NEADS personnel could have been unaware of the different voices, and only have heard from their colleagues that a particular piece of information came from "Colin Scoggins."

#### **PREVIOUS EXERCISES INCLUDED SCENARIOS SIMILAR TO 9/11 ATTACKS**

It was not just exercise events during the previous few days that may have resulted in confusion at NEADS on September 11. What could also have increased the likelihood that NEADS personnel would mistake the 9/11 attacks for part of the exercise is the fact that during the previous two years, these personnel had participated in other exercises based around scenarios closely resembling what happened on September 11.

For example, the previous Vigilant Guardian, held in October 2000, included a scenario in which a pilot planned to deliberately crash an aircraft into a skyscraper in New York. The simulation involved an individual stealing a Federal Express plane with the intention of using it for a suicide attack on the 39-story United Nations headquarters building. [44]

Another exercise NEADS took part in, called "Falcon Indian" and held in June 2000, was based on the possibility of a "Communist Party faction" hijacking an aircraft bound from the western to the eastern United States. The fictitious hijackers intended to crash the plane into the Statue of Liberty, located close to the Twin Towers, in New York Harbor. [45]

Remarkably, one NORAD exercise, held at an unspecified time in the two years prior to 9/11, was based on the possibility of a hijacked aircraft being used as a weapon and deliberately crashed into the World Trade Center. [46] Furthermore, NORAD has stated that most of the four major exercises it held each year before 9/11 "included a hijack scenario." [47] So, although most of the personnel on the NEADS operations floor were unaware beforehand what the exercise was going to entail on September 11, they might surely have wondered if the plane hijackings and the attacks in New York that day were simulated, since these events so closely resembled scenarios played out in previous exercises.

#### **EXERCISES INCLUDED MOCK TV NEWS REPORTS**

One might think that television coverage of the 9/11 attacks would have convinced those at NEADS that they were dealing with actual terrorist attacks rather than simulated ones. However, there is evidence that casts doubt on this assertion.

It is known that simulated television news reports had been used in training exercises before 9/11. For example, a two-day exercise was held at Andrews Air Force Base, Maryland, in June 2001, called "Dark Winter," based on the scenario of a smallpox attack on the United States. This exercise, according to *New York* magazine, included "simulated

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news clips from an imaginary cable news network called NCN." [48] Whether NORAD exercises prior to 9/11 included simulated television footage is unknown. But this possibility should certainly be investigated.

The possibility should also be investigated that NEADS personnel mistakenly thought television news reports of the 9/11 attacks were video created to make their exercise seem more realistic. Unlikely as it might seem, evidence shows this scenario is plausible. It has been reported that volunteers taking part in another military exercise on the morning of September 11 did incorrectly think that television coverage of the attacks in New York was video footage created for their exercise. That exercise, called "Timely Alert II," was held at Fort Monmouth, an Army base about 50 miles south of New York City, and was based around a simulated biochemical terrorist attack at the base. Exercise participants later recalled that "when they first saw live footage of the events unfolding at the World Trade Center, they thought it was some elaborate training video to accompany the exercise." One training officer was told by a participant, "You really outdid yourself this time." [49] If workers at Fort Monmouth could make this error, surely those at NEADS could have done so too.

### **WAS CONFUSION CAUSED BY THE EXERCISE INTENDED TO PARALYZE THE MILITARY?**

Officials have claimed that the U.S. military was unaffected in its ability to respond to the 9/11 attacks by the Vigilant Guardian exercise. During one of the 9/11 Commission's public hearings, commissioner Timothy Roemer asked whether the exercise delayed the military. He suggested that, in response to reports of the attacks, personnel might have thought, "No, there's no possibility that this is real-world; we're engaged in an exercise." But General Ralph Eberhart, the commander of NORAD on September 11, replied that "it became painfully clear ... that this was not an exercise." He said the situation Roemer referred to "at most cost us 30 seconds." [50]

The evidence described above, however, suggests that Vigilant Guardian could have seriously impaired the military. It may have caused significant confusion, because those at NEADS were unclear whether the events of September 11 were real or part of the exercise. There is therefore a need for a close examination of this exercise, as well as other exercises that took place on September 11 and in the years before then.

### **UNANSWERED QUESTIONS ABOUT VIGILANT GUARDIAN**

As part of a new investigation of 9/11, those who served at NEADS on September 11 need to be given the opportunity to talk openly about their experiences that day. Evidence already available raises many questions. For example, which events on September 11 did NEADS personnel think might be part of the exercise? And at what time did these personnel know for certain that the exercise had been terminated?

We need to know which individuals were responsible for designing the Vigilant Guardian exercise that was taking place in September 2001, and who designed the earlier exercises that included scenarios resembling the 9/11 attacks. We also need to know who was responsible for running Vigilant Guardian on September 11, along with full details of the simulations planned for that day.

The fact that some previous NORAD exercises closely resembled the 9/11 attacks, and the fact that the Vigilant Guardian exercise taking place in September 2001 included scenarios similar to the 9/11 attacks, should be of serious concern. Such facts suggest the possibility that training exercises were used to deliberately paralyze the military on September 11, thereby ensuring that the attacks in New York and at the Pentagon were successful.

### **NOTES**

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[2] Leslie Filson, *Air War Over America: Sept. 11 Alters Face of Air Defense Mission*. Tyndall Air Force Base, FL: 1st Air Force, 2003, pp. 55, 122.

[3] [Michael Bronner, "9/11 Live: The NORAD Tapes." \*Vanity Fair\*, August 2006.](#)

[4] [Jason Tudor, "Inner Space." \*Airman\*, March 2002](#); Leslie Filson, *Air War Over America*, p. 59.

[5] 9/11 Commission, *The 9/11 Commission Report: Final Report of the National Commission on Terrorist Attacks Upon the United States*. New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2004, p. 458.

[6] *Ibid.* p. 20; Lynn Spencer, *Touching History: The Untold Story of the Drama That Unfolded in the Skies Over America on 9/11*. New York: Free Press, 2008, p. 25.

- [7] Michael Bronner, "9/11 Live."
- [8] Ibid.; Lynn Spencer, *Touching History*, pp. 82, 84.
- [9] NEADS Audio File, Identification Technician Position, Channel 4. North American Aerospace Defense Command, September 11, 2001; "The Hunt for American Air Eleven After WTC 1 is Hit." 9/11 Commission, n.d.
- [10] NEADS Audio File, Identification Technician Position, Channel 7. North American Aerospace Defense Command, September 11, 2001; Miles Kara, "Exercise not a Detractor; the Definitive Story." 9/11 Revisited, September 1, 2011.
- [11] NEADS Audio File, Identification Technician Position, Channel 4; "Transcripts From Voice Recorder, 11 September 2001 1227Z-1417Z, Northeast Air Defense Sector, Rome, NY." North American Aerospace Defense Command, September 11, 2001.
- [12] NEADS Audio File, Mission Crew Commander Position, Channel 3. North American Aerospace Defense Command, September 11, 2001; Miles Kara, "Exercise not a Detractor; the Definitive Story."
- [13] Lynn Spencer, *Touching History*, p. 26.
- [14] "9/11: Interviews by Peter Jennings." ABC News, September 11, 2002.
- [15] National Commission on Terrorist Attacks Upon the United States: Public Hearing. 9/11 Commission, May 23, 2003.
- [16] Lynn Spencer, *Touching History*, p. 38.
- [17] *The 9/11 Tapes: Chaos in the Sky*. Discovery Channel, February 12, 2012.
- [18] Ibid.
- [19] Michael Bronner, "9/11 Live."
- [20] NEADS Audio File, Mission Crew Commander Position, Channel 2. North American Aerospace Defense Command, September 11, 2001; Miles Kara, "NEADS Mission Crew Commander; a Valiant Effort, Ultimately Futile, Part I." 9/11 Revisited, June 4, 2011.
- [21] NEADS Audio File, Mission Crew Commander Position, Channel 2; Michael Bronner, "9/11 Live"; Miles Kara, "Exercise not a Detractor; the Definitive Story."
- [22] NEADS Audio File, Air Surveillance Technician Position, Channel 15. North American Aerospace Defense Command, September 11, 2001.
- [23] Miles Kara, "Exercise not a Detractor; the Definitive Story."
- [24] Gail Braymen, "NORAD Personnel Hone Response Skills in Amalgam Arrow Exercises." North American Aerospace Defense Command, February 22, 2007.
- [25] Nick Wadhams, "Joint U.S., Canadian Hijacking Drill Takes off With Whidbey Flight." Associated Press, June 4, 2002; "Airborne Anti-Terrorist Operation Getting Underway." *Live Today*, CNN, June 4, 2002; "Memorandum for the Record: Interview With Major Paul Goddard (Canadian Forces) and Ken Merchant." 9/11 Commission, March 4, 2004.
- [26] "Memorandum for the Record: Interview With Lt. Col. Dawne Deskins." 9/11 Commission, October 30, 2003.
- [27] "Memorandum for the Record: Interview With Major James Fox." 9/11 Commission, October 29, 2003.
- [28] Michael Bronner, "9/11 Live"; "NEADS CDs." 9/11 Commission, n.d.
- [29] *The 9/11 Tapes*.
- [30] NEADS Audio File, Mission Crew Commander Position, Channel 2; NEADS Audio File, Mission Crew Commander Position, Channel 3; Michael Bronner, "9/11 Live."
- [31] Leslie Filson, *Air War Over America*, p. 55.
- [32] Lynn Spencer, *Touching History*, p. 26.
- [33] "Event: Terrorist on Board a Regular Flight From London to JFK." North American Aerospace Defense Command, n.d., p. 74; "NORAD Exercises: Hijack Summary." 9/11 Commission, n.d.
- [34] "Memorandum for the Record: Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) Boston Center Field Site Interview With Colin Scoggins, Military Operations Specialist." 9/11 Commission, September 22, 2003.
- [35] Lynn Spencer, *Touching History*, p. 33.
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- [37] "Q&A With Boston Center Air Traffic Controller." 9/11 Guide, October 28, 2007.
- [38] *Chasing Planes: Witnesses to 9/11*. Directed by Michael Bronner. London: Working Title Films, 2006.
- [39] Lynn Spencer, *Touching History*, p. 82.
- [40] "Memorandum for the Record: Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) Boston Center Field Site Interview 1 With Daniel D. Bueno, Traffic Management Supervisor, Boston Center." 9/11 Commission, September 22, 2003.
- [41] *Aviation Officials Remember September 11, 2001*. C-SPAN, September 11, 2010.
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