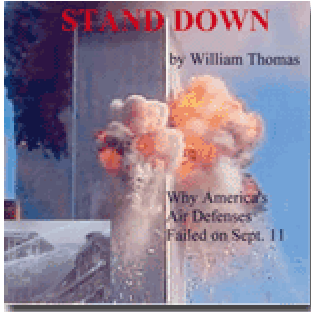


STAND DOWN | by William Thomas | Audio Book Excerpts



STAND DOWN | 125 Min 2 CD | Audio Book

Why America's Air Defenses Failed on Sept. 11

by William Thomas

OPERATION VIGILANT GUARDIAN

On the morning of Sept. 11, 2001, NORAD was three days into Operation Vigilant Guardian. Held twice a year to tweak NORAD's continent-spanning surveillance, communications and interception web, North American air defenses that morning were aggressively alert and battle staffed, with key officers needed to make immediate decisions stationed in the "battle cabs" of each interlinked air force command post.

Anything out of the ordinary – inside or outside continental airspace – would have been jumped on instantly as some sneaky part of the drill! Suspect planes would have been plotted on powerful radars, and interceptors immediately launched - just as regulations required.

For reasons not yet explained, on Sept. 11, Operation Vigilant Guardian saw America's air defenses locked on the North Pole for a simulated attack by a former Cold War enemy who was now an ally.

Who's idea was that?

ROUTINE INTERCEPTS

In the year before Sept. 11, from the previous September through June 2001, NORAD scrambled fighters 67 times to intercept wayward aircraft...

FAA AND MILITARY: LOOKING THROUGH THE SAME RADAR EYES

NEADS protects some of the most high-value terrorist targets in the USA. Conveniently concentrated on the country's Northeast corridor, this target rich environment of 20 million people has its own dedicated air defense force.

Sharing powerful radars tied into the Federal Aviation Administration's air traffic control network, the Northeast Air Defence Sector (NEADS) can draw on eight armed alert fighters. The Joint Surveillance System, a billion-dollar network of long range Air Route Surveillance Radars provides total air defense and air traffic control for the continental United States. New Model 4 Air Route Surveillance Radars out to 250 nautical miles.

Military radar operators at more than a dozen sites along the US East coast "look at everything in the air" - according to a former radar defense operator, who says his Maine radar outpost "often" scrambled interceptors on its own authority, without waiting to hear from the FAA or their own higher command.

8:43:

TWO F-16S ALREADY AIRBORNE NEAR MANHATTAN.

Armed with practice bombs for runs over New Jersey's Pine Barrens near Atlantic City, the intimidating interceptors are just eight minutes from Manhattan at cruising speed. Flying flat-out, the fighters from the Atlantic City-based 177th Fighter Wing can be over the WTC in less than three minutes. Either way, they would have had time to try disrupting Flight 11's flight path with close passes. Or - as the Pentagon later admitted to considering - ramming.

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8:46:

OTIS SCRAMBLE

Nasty and Duff ordered to scramble. The distance from Cape Cod to New York City is about 170 miles as a Strike Eagle flies.

"1,200 MPH" - ARNOLD

Referring to the same interceptions, Gen. Arnold subsequently stated: "Our pilots were coming at about 1.5 mach, which is, you know, somewhere - 11 or 1200 miles an hour."

If so, they would have intercepted Flight 175.

"SCALDED APES"

Maj. Gen. Paul Weaver - the Strike Eagles out of Otis had flown "like a scalded ape ... topping 500 mph." But two of the world's fastest fighters were unable to catch up to an airliner flying faster.

A NORAD press bulletin providing actual flight times also insists that none of its interceptors flew faster than the speed of sound. Elapsed flight times show Nasty and Duff taking much longer to reach Manhattan than going supersonic would have required. NORAD's news bulletin accurately states that the fighters actually flew at just 500 MPH.

But the F-15 can fly faster than 1,870 miles per hour.

447 MPH

Instead of flying two-and-a-half times faster than a bullet, Nasty and Duff drive their supersonic "air superiority" fighters at a leisurely 447 mph - ostensibly to intercept a Boeing 767 flying 43 mph faster.

These clipped Eagles take 11 minutes to cover the same distance. Utilizing only one-quarter power, the F-15 Strike Eagles are still eight minutes and 71 miles away when Flight 175 strikes the South Tower.

9:22:

SUPERSONIC OVER PENNSYLVANIA

An earthquake monitor 60 miles from Shanksville, Pennsylvania picks up a sonic boom caused by a supersonic jet.

LANGLEY SCRAMBLED AFTER WAITING 1 HOUR

Pentagon professionals paid and pledged to defend American airspace have waited *more than an hour* after watching Flight 11 go rogue - including 30 critical minutes after Flight 77 turned abruptly toward them and the White House less than a dozen miles away - before thinking to scramble the Air National Guard F-16's out of Langley to protect the capitol.

"WE NEVER THOUGHT ABOUT THIS"

Acting air defense commander General Richard Myers later said: "You hate to admit it, but we hadn't thought about this."

But they had.

Just 11 months before - between October 24 and 26, 2000 - NORAD had trained "for a passenger plane crashing into the Pentagon".

On 911 - as Flight 77 took off from Dulles International - the super-secret National Reconnaissance Office operating all U.S. spy satellites was about to conduct an emergency drill in which a simulated plane from Dulles International dives into their building.

PLENTY OF TIME FOR OTIS JETS TO REACH FLIGHT 77

American Airlines Flight 77 is the only threat left in the eastern sky. With no remaining bogeys on their scopes, air force doctrine dictates that the two unemployed Otis F-15s already in the area be redirected to "honor the threat" of an incoming hijacked jumbo jet. **Even if Nasty and Duff loaf along at 532 mph - or 28% of top speed - they will still have 26 minutes to deal with Flight 77 before it nears the Pentagon.**

MEANDERING INTERCEPTORS FROM LANGLEY

Nearly half-an-hour after receiving the belated order to scramble, Langley's clipped Falcons coast in over the burning Pentagon. **Slowed down to just 410 mph, it has taken the 1,500 mph-capable fighters 19 minutes to cover the 130 miles from Virginia.**

It should have taken just over seven minutes to reach the Pentagon. Which would have put them overhead about the time Flight 77 was making a predatory circle.

Instead, the supersonic jets fly no faster than a WWII prop-driven fighter.

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ANDREWS

But it hardly matters. Sitting on the Andrews ramp just 10 miles away, are two fully armed and fueled supersonic interceptors tasked with protecting the capitol from airborne terrorist threats on 15 minutes' notice. But **on Sept. 11, these routinely scrambled Andrews interceptors were "stood down" as Flight 77 bored in toward the headquarters they were supposed to protect!**

NO DIVERSIONS

Why weren't any of the fighters on training flights or patrolling Air Defense Intercept Zones just off the Atlantic Coast – or engaged in Vigilant Guardian - was diverted to intercept four commandeered jetliners?

TWO DOZEN AIR BASES

In the most heavily armed nation on Earth, at least two-dozen air force installations are within fast flying time of the World Trade Center and Pentagon.

10:02

FLIGHT 93 COCKPIT TAPE

Air traffic controllers Flight 93 the last five to seven minutes recorded on Flight 93's cockpit tape are "filled with violence and yelling in both Arabic and English."

According to three *Newsweek* reporters: "The Investigators are looking into the possibility that the heroes came very close to the cockpit."

So what brought down Flight 93?

9:58

SHOOTDOWN OVER PENNSYLVANIA

As the hijackers fight with passengers and crew in the cabin of Flight 93, an F-16 is lining up to take the shot. As a flight controller in New Hampshire later described the picture on his scope: **"An F-16 fighter closely pursued United Airlines Flight 93.** The F-16 made 360-degree turns to remain close to the commercial jet. He must've seen the whole thing."

Onboard the doomed airliner, a desperate male passenger locks himself inside one of the toilets and dials 911. "We're being hijacked, we're being hijacked!" Just before contact was broken, he hears an explosion and sees white smoke coming from the plane. "We're going down!" he shouts.

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The last sound heard on Flight 93's Cockpit Voice Recorder is wind noise - suggesting the plane had been holed. Some witnesses also report seeing smoke and flames coming from the Boeing as it fell.

SECONDARY CRASH SITE

Light debris from the crash, eight miles from the crash site, included something that looked like a rib bone, pieces of airliner seats, small chunks of melted plastic, bank checks and other debris began washing ashore at the marina.

At the secondary impact site eight miles away – half of one of the large engines weighing 1,000 pounds came down – which is what happens when a jet turbine is blown off of an airliner's wing by a heat-seeking explosive warhead. It will take the air force two more hours to deny firing on the doomed airliner.

UNITED 23 TO LA THWARTED

United Flight 23, prevented from pushback by Norman Mineta's emergency grounding orders. Onboard the fuel-heavy airliner three angry Arabian passengers loudly demanded that the flight proceed to Los Angeles. Kicked off the plane, the would-be hijackers vanished before police showed up.

ANGRY FORMER CONTROLLER

At least one former Pentagon air traffic controller is still angry. "All those years ago when I was at the Pentagon, this wouldn't have happened," the former Pentagon air traffic controller wrote a 911 investigator.

"ATC Radar images were - and are - available in the understructures of the Pentagon, and any commercial flight within 300 miles of Washington DC that made an abrupt course change toward Washington DC, or turned off their transponder and refused to communicate with ATC, would have been intercepted at supersonic speeds within minutes by fighters out of Andrews AFB. **Why there were no fighters from Andrews up baffles me. If we could get fighters notified, scrambled, and airborne within about six- minutes from Andrews AFB then, we could now."**

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SOURCES:

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All Fall Down: The Politics of Terror and Mass Persuasion

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AP 8/13/02; 8/22/03; 11/11/03

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ATC recordings – or search Google

<http://emperor.vwh.net/indict/indict-2.htm>

NORAD Press Release:

<http://StandDown.net/NORADSeptember182001PressRelease.htm>

<http://www.standdown.net/noradseptember182001pressrelease.htm>

NORTH AMERICAN AEROSPACE DEFENSE COMMAND

News Release

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NORAD's Response Times

PETERSON AFB, Colo. --The following timelines show NORAD's response to the airliner hijackings on September 11, 2001.

- * All times are Eastern Daylight Time; NEADS = North East Air Defense Sector, NORAD
- ** Scramble = Order to get an aircraft airborne as soon as possible
- ***Estimated = loss of radar contact
- **** Flight times are calculated at 9 miles per minute or .9 Mach
- ***** The FAA and NEADS established a line of open communication discussing AA Flt 77 and UA Flt 93

American Airlines Flight 11 – Boston enroute to Los Angeles

FAA Notification to NEADS	
0840*	
Fighter Scramble Order (<i>Otis Air National Guard Base, Falmouth, Mass. Two F-15s</i>)	
0846**	
Fighters Airborne	0852
Airline Impact Time (World Trade Center 1)	
0846 (<i>estimated</i>)***	
Fighter Time/Distance from Airline Impact Location	
Aircraft not airborne/153 miles	

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United Airlines Flight 175 – Boston enroute to Los Angeles

FAA Notification to NEADS
0843
Fighter Scramble Order (*Otis ANGB, Falmouth, Mass. Same 2 F-15s as Flight 11*)
0846
Fighters Airborne 0852
Airline Impact Time (World Trade Center 2)
0902 (*estimated*)
Fighter Time/Distance from Airline Impact Location
approx 8 min****/71 miles

American Flight 77 –Dulles enroute to Los Angeles

FAA Notification to NEADS
0924
Fighter Scramble Order (*Langley AFB, Hampton, Va. 2 [F-16s](#)*)
0924
Fighters Airborne 0930
Airline Impact Time (Pentagon)
0937(*estimated*)
Fighter Time/Distance from Airline Impact Location
approx 12 min/105 miles

United Flight 93 – Newark to San Francisco

FAA Notification to NEADS
N/A *****
Fighter Scramble Order (*Langley F-16s already airborne for AA Flt 77*)
Fighters Airborne (*Langley F-16 CAP remains in place to protect DC*)
Airline Impact Time (Pennsylvania) 1003
(*estimated*)
Fighter Time/Distance from Airline Impact Location
approx 11 min/100 miles

(*from
DC F-16 CAP*)