

Fleas under a Microscope: Evidence there was no third jet involved in the World Trade Center attacksAbstract

It has been suggested by at least one conspiracy theorist that there was a "Third jet" involved in a purposeful conspiracy to destroy the three World Trade Center structures on September 11, 2001. Not every point in the conspiracy story document will be addressed since the evidence presented in this document, if accurate, will render them moot. This paper proposes to examine the conspiracy stories veracity and offer alternative explanations which fit the time table and events of the day.

Introduction

In a document written on a conspiracy theory web site, the following passage can be found.

No avoidance warning from Air Traffic Control would be necessary, as no rational commercial pilot (no matter how curious) would risk his aircraft, crew or passengers in a "fly-by" of the burning North Tower. But in this anonymous Camera Planet segment we see a large, twin-jet aircraft (757/767-class) doing just that at approximately 8:58am (assuming the time signature is uncorrected by one hour), five minutes before WTC2 will be struck. Even disregarding the indicated time, as WTC1 is burning and WTC2 is not, the segment is clearly recorded between 8:46am and 9:03am. Note this white aircraft with dark engines and vertical stabilizer is *not* the aircraft that will impact WTC2

The video snapshot below was used to buttress the conclusion.



Observations

The airliner in question may seem close at first glance, but is it? Evidence suggests this video was taken at an angle. (10 to 15 degrees) The camera operator is about 4 stories high judging by the trees close to the operator's vantage point. We can say with high probability that this photo was taken from between 3 and 5 stories up. The camera planet video also shows the zoom used in creating the video. This was a zoom lens with a good range. There is a high probability that it was taken with one of the better consumer zoom video cameras on the market due to the time on the image which suggests a novice operator. Evidence of how a zoom can affect perception is seen below.

<http://www.cs.mtu.edu/~shene/DigiCam/User-Guide/990/ON-CAMERA-LENS/optical-zoom.html>

As you can see, the evidence points to a "Zoom effect" created by distance compression which creates the perception that objects in the distance are closer than they are. The angle of the camera also makes the airliner look lower than it is. The further away the airliner is, the higher it will look as you zoom back.

Consider the following snap shots of the same video taken at different frames.



As you can see, the plane in this frame is just a few dots.



Just four frames later, the plane is completely gone from the video. This is a product of the camera person zooming out which changed the viewers perception of the video.

The writer then writes.

According to the 9/11 Commission, two F-15s were scrambled from Otis Air Force Base at 8:52am (39 minutes after flight controllers lost contact with AA11), and were inbound to NYC at supersonic speed, presumably to intercept suspicious airliners. Presumably commercial flights in NY airspace would be alerted to this danger. Yet this aircraft cruises slowly near the stricken North Tower, seemingly unconcerned its behavior makes it a logical target for these fighters.

Note the time given in the 9/11 report. The jets were scrambled at 8:52. The camera planet video is taken at 8:58. 8:58 is just after the first plane hit at 8:46. What's kept out of the conspiracy story is the time New York ordered no take off and landings.

From the 9/11 commission report:

At 9:05, Boston Center confirmed for both the FAA Command Center and the New England Region that the hijackers aboard American 11 said "we have *planes*." At the same time, **New York Center declared "ATC zero"-meaning that aircraft were not permitted to depart from, arrive at, or travel through New York Center's airspace until further notice.**¹³²

The skies are filled with airliners on any given day. Just after the first plane hit there would have been literally hundreds of airliners in the air coming into NY and NJ. Many more would just pass by NY and NJ on their way to other states and even countries. On a normal day they can land about one airliner every 2 to 3 minutes for a number of reasons. If they follow another airliner too closely they can get caught up in their wake and lose control.

Moments after takeoff from John F. Kennedy International Airport, an American Airlines pilot pressed hard on rudder pedals to help stabilize the shaking plane from wake turbulence. But instead of smoothing the ride, the National Transportation Safety Board said yesterday, the pilot's action was "unnecessary and too aggressive" and resulted in the plane's tail falling off. Seconds later, the plane plunged into a New York neighborhood, killing 260 people onboard and five on the ground.

<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/articles/A63850-2004Oct26.html>

They also need time to clear the runways of traffic as airliners taxi to their gate. Expecting an airport to simply land airliners without taking this into consideration would risk the passengers and crew along with others on the ground.

The two F-15s did not have orders to shoot down airliners over American skies at the time. There was no threat to the passengers or crews of the airliners in question.

Please consider these links to actual real time Air traffic radar below. Click on the 80 mile range to get a good view of the air traffic in that range.

John F. Kennedy International Airport <http://www4.passur.com/jfk.html>

LaGuardia Airport <http://www4.passur.com/lga.html>

Newark International Airport <http://www4.passur.com/ewr.html>

Teterboro Airport <http://www4.passur.com/teb.html>

Note the amount of air traffic at any given time in an 80 mile range. You can count how long it takes for airliners to land at these airports. You can also see just how close the towers were. The towers were at the southern tip of Manhattan.

You will also see something interesting in the links provided above. There are airliners flying in every direction. You can see the holding patterns and approach paths.

Journal of Debunking 9/11 Conspiracy Theories - Aug 2006/Volume 1, Issue 1

Below are some photographs which show just how close the towers were to the airports.



There are two airliners with “Dark vertical stabilizer[s]” in this photo. This is from JFK airport. Below is a photo of Newark International Airport. The airliner in the camera planet video may well be from one of these airlines.



These are not 767's or 757's but the photos do illustrate how close the towers were to major airports in the region. Judging by the shadows on buildings and the jet planes, it looks like this photo was taken in mid afternoon when all airliners would have landed. The Fire Department was told of the third plane shortly after the second plane hit. Flight AA77 was unaccounted for and the fire department sensibly took precautions to alert firefighters of the possibility of yet another airliner impacting the building.

Between 8:25 and 8:32, in accordance with the FAA protocol, Boston Center managers started notifying their chain of command that American 11 had been hijacked. At 8:28, Boston Center called the Command Center in Herndon to advise that it believed American 11 had been hijacked and was heading toward New York Center's airspace.

F-15 fighters were scrambled at 8:46 from Otis Air Force Base. But NEADS did not know where to send the alert fighter aircraft, and the officer directing the fighters pressed for more information: "I don't know where I'm scrambling these guys to. I need a direction, a destination." Because the hijackers had turned off the plane's transponder, NEADS personnel spent the next minutes searching their radar scopes for the primary radar return. American 11 struck the North Tower at 8:46. Shortly after 8:50, while NEADS personnel were still trying to locate the flight, word reached them that a plane had hit the World Trade Center.¹¹⁹

Radar data show the Otis fighters were airborne at 8:53. Lacking a target, they were vectored toward military-controlled airspace off the Long Island coast. To avoid New York area air traffic and uncertain about what to do, the fighters were brought down to military airspace to "hold as needed."From 9:09 to 9:13, the Otis fighters stayed in this holding pattern.¹²⁰

In summary, NEADS received notice of the hijacking nine minutes before it struck the North Tower. That nine minutes' notice before impact was the most the military would receive of any of the four hijackings.¹²¹

9:05... ..New York Center declared "ATC zero"-meaning that aircraft were not permitted to depart from, arrive at, or travel through New York Center's airspace until further notice.¹³²

The FAA cleared the airspace. Radar data show that at 9:13, when the Otis fighters were about 115 miles away from the city, the fighters exited their holding pattern and set a course direct for Manhattan. They arrived at 9:25 and established a combat air patrol (CAP) over the city.¹³⁶

NORAD heard nothing about the search for American 77. Instead, the **NEADS air defenders heard renewed reports about a plane that no longer existed: American 11.**

At 9:21, NEADS received a report from the FAA:

FAA: Military, Boston Center. I just had a report that American 11 is still in the air, and it's on its way towards-heading towards Washington.

NEADS: Okay. American 11 is still in the air?

FAA: Yes.

NEADS: On its way towards Washington?

FAA: That was another-it was evidently another aircraft that hit the tower. That's the latest report we have.

NEADS: Okay.

FAA: I'm going to try to confirm an ID for you, but I would assume he's somewhere over, uh, either New Jersey or somewhere further south.

NEADS: Okay. So American 11 isn't the hijack at all then, right?

FAA: No, he is a hijack.

NEADS: He-American 11 is a hijack?

FAA: Yes.

NEADS: And he's heading into Washington?

FAA: Yes. This **could** be a third aircraft.¹⁴⁸

The mention of a "third aircraft" was not a reference to American 77. There was confusion at that moment in the FAA. Two planes had struck the World Trade Center, and Boston Center had heard from FAA headquarters in Washington that American 11 was still airborne. We have been unable to identify the source of this mistaken FAA information.

The NEADS technician who took this call from the FAA immediately passed the word to the mission crew commander, who reported to the NEADS battle commander:

Mission Crew Commander, NEADS: Okay, uh, American Airlines is still airborne. Eleven, the first guy, he's heading towards Washington. Okay? I think we need to scramble Langley

right now. And I'm gonna take the fighters from Otis, try to chase this guy down if I can find him.¹⁴⁹

After consulting with NEADS command, the crew commander issued the order at 9:23: "Okay . . . scramble Langley. Head them towards the Washington area. . . [I]f they're there then we'll run on them. . . These guys are smart." That order was processed and transmitted to Langley Air Force Base at 9:24. Radar data show the Langley fighters airborne at 9:30. NEADS decided to keep the Otis fighters over New York. The heading of the Langley fighters was adjusted to send them to the Baltimore area. The mission crew commander explained to us that the purpose was to position the Langley fighters between the reported southbound American 11 and the nation's capital.¹⁵⁰

At the suggestion of the Boston Center's military liaison, NEADS contacted the FAA's Washington Center to ask about American 11. In the course of the conversation, a Washington Center manager informed NEADS: "We're looking-we also lost American 77." The time was 9:34.¹⁵¹ This was the first notice to the military that American 77 was missing, and it had come by chance. If NEADS had not placed that call, the NEADS air defenders would have received no information whatsoever that the flight was even missing, although the FAA had been searching for it. No one at FAA headquarters ever asked for military assistance with American 77.

During the course of the morning, there were multiple erroneous reports of hijacked aircraft. The report of American 11 heading south was the first; Delta 1989 was the second.¹⁵⁵

http://www.9-11commission.gov/report/911Report_Ch1.htm

Upon careful review of the 9/11 commission report above, we see the reason for the jetfighter staying away from NY was for safety reasons. As the links I provided show, the air traffic around NY is one of the heaviest in the nation. Having very fast fighters flying around Manhattan without a target would risk the lives of the pilots, passengers of airliners and crews. They would also risk anyone on the ground if a jetfighter would have collided with an airliner over populated land.

We also find NY didn't get an "ATC-zero" until 9:05.

There were "**multiple erroneous reports**" of hijacked airliners.

Conclusion

- 1) Though not stated, the impression left by the conspiracy story writer and his peers is that it would have been easy to instantly land the airliners or they would be at full throttle running for their lives as trigger happy jet pilots scanned the skies. There is no evidence to support this part of the conspiracy story.

- 2) The videos given by the conspiracy story writer and his peers, upon careful review show something much different than presented in the conspiracy story. The airliner may be at 5,000 to 8,000 feet due to the angle of the camera and zoom used. It may be even higher. The writer failed to note the angle of the camera during recording (Possibly 10-15 degrees) or the “zoom effect” created by this feature. Thus, the characterization that the commercial pilot was engaged in a “fly-by” of the burning North Tower” is in direct contradiction of the video he and his peers present. The pilot was far from the towers and at a higher altitude than suggested.
- 3) The writer and his peers also omit important information from the 9/11 report which would have explained the airliner at 8:58, given it wasn’t until 9:05 that NY Center ordered an “ATC-zero”. Even though fighters were in the air, airliners were not told they couldn’t land or take off.
- 4) Flight AA11 was not the only erroneous report that day. The writer of the conspiracy story and his peers omitted the other errors made on that chaotic day. The error was already addressed in the 9/11 report which paints a very confusing and chaotic time for the ‘people’ involved.
- 5) For a criminal act to be committed as the conspiracy story suggest there would have to be many people involved. The jet fighters would have noticed an airliner flying around the towers and not radioed it in. Anyone involved in the “Live fly”. The FAA for telling Boston Flight Control to relay a message to NEADS that AA11 was still in the air and heading south and The 9/11 commission.
- 6) The question never answered in the conspiracy story is what would this aircraft be doing as part of any conspiracy? Site seeing? There were many airliners in the air at the time. Why would they need another airliner which inserts yet another security hole? The military aircraft pointed to on a link gives no mention of having a capacity to monitor or control an attack. And why would they need too? The attack didn’t include flying through flak. Its “**Primary Function:** High-priority personnel transport”. The entry of this aircraft as a possible third jet seems to be out of desperation to provide a link to the government that doesn’t exist. The writer and his peers fail to logically predict that it may have been shot down if it were meant to confuse. It wasn’t proven to be around during the collapse of any of the buildings. Until this question is answered, the only logical conclusion one can make is that it’s part of the conspiracy story to create a sinister atmosphere for its readers. Nothing more.

Airliners seen over New York after the first tower impact on September 11, 2001 would be predicted given the evidence. There is no reason to suspect the airliner in the video is anything other than a normal airliner on a very chaotic day. What the writer of the conspiracy story sees as a “Flying Elephant” is actually a “Fleas under a Microscope”.