

9/11 War Games

by James Corbett

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[Source](#)

Little did we know at the time, 9/11 was not a normal day of blue sky aviation. On the contrary, it was one of the busiest days in the history of American aviation, a dense forest of live fly exercises, drills, simulations, fake radar injects and utter confusion. And that was before the attacks even began. This is the story of 9/11 that you didn't watch unfold on your TV that fateful day in 2001. This is the story of the **9/11 War Games**.

TRANSCRIPT

When we remember the events of 9/11, we are often invited to reflect on how the attack came out of the clear, blue sky. Until the terror began to unfold in real time on everyone's television screen, it was just another beautiful, blue sky day, a perfect day for aviation.

CNN ANCHOR: It is 8 AM in Salisbury, North Carolina, 7:00 a.m. in Chicago, 5:00 a.m. in Calaveras County, California, where the news is being made on this Tuesday, September 11th.

CNN ANCHOR 2: From CNN...

MATT LAUER: Anyway, that's all coming up. 8:01 let's get to the top news stories of the morning. For that we turn to Anne Curry.

ANN CURRY: Because now we have a camera. Katy, Matt and Al, thank you so much this morning. Good morning, everybody, again.

SARAH FERGUSON: ...but isn't in America, in politics, isn't spinning...What is spinning, Charlie?

CHARLIE GIBSON: Well, spinning is getting out your point of view, trying to put your interpretation on something.

FERGUSON: So do you think there is a lot of spinning done in politics...

FOX ANCHOR: ...Miss America pageant, but this year things are different. Contestants will be quizzed on current events, US history and government. 10 of the 51 contestants got a preview. Among the questions: Naming the current vice president, and knowing what happened December 7th, 1941. Two contestants didn't know Dick Cheney was the vice president and four missed the bombing of Pearl Harbor.

EARLY SHOW: Miles and miles of sunshine. Miles Davis. Going to put Miles out there today. Nice as it could be across the Northeast. Rough seas still from from the chop from that hurricane, but other than that it's kind of quiet around the country. We like quiet. It's quiet. It's too quiet.

SOURCE: ["It's Too Quiet" The Early Morning Television of 9/11/2001](#)

But that was merely the public's impression of the events from ground level. Little did we know at the time, 9/11 was not a normal day of blue sky aviation. On the contrary, it was one of the busiest days in the history of American aviation, a dense forest of live fly exercises, drills, simulations, fake

radar injects and utter confusion. And that was before the attacks even began.

This is the story of 9/11 that you didn't watch unfold on your TV that fateful day in 2001. This is the story of the **9/11 War Games**.

PART ONE – WAR GAMES

It only stands to reason that government employees, armed forces and first responders spend a considerable amount of time every year training to respond to crises. A major, catastrophic event may only happen once in a lifetime, but if and when it does occur, the appropriate personnel need to know how to respond.

Not all military exercises and government drills are the same, however. These training events can range all the way from computer simulations and war games—where no personnel are deployed and no physical resources are committed—to live field exercises where real people use real equipment and even real munitions to practice responding to real-world emergencies or simulate real warfare. And as these drills and exercises move from abstract models to real-life exercises, the line between reality and simulation can become blurry.

What does it mean, then, when a simulation of an emergency takes place at the exact same place and time as that real emergency is happening in real life?

***PETER POWER:** Today we were running an exercise for a company—bearing in mind I'm now in the private sector—and we sat everybody down in the City. A thousand people involved in the whole organization, but the crisis team. And the most peculiar thing was we based our scenario on the simultaneous attacks on that underground and mainline station so we had to suddenly switch an exercise from fictional to real.*

[. . .]

INTERVIEWER: *Just to get this right, you were actually working today on an exercise that envisioned virtually this scenario?*

POWER: *Almost precisely.*

SOURCE: [Peter Power 7/7 Terror Rehearsal](#)

In the hours after the July 7th, 2005 bombings in London, Peter Power gave a series of interviews to various outlets confirming that he had been running an exercise at the exact time of the attack. That exercise envisioned bombs going off at Liverpool Street, King's Cross, and Russell Square at exactly the same time as real bombs were going off at those very locations.

PETER POWER: *At half past 9 this morning we were actually running an exercise for a company of over a thousand people in London based on simultaneous bombs going off precisely at the railway stations where it happened this morning, so I still have the hairs on the back of my neck standing up right now.*

HOST: *To get this quite straight, you were running an exercise to see how you would cope with this and it happened while you were running the exercise?*

POWER: *Precisely.*

SOURCE: [Peter Power 7/7 Terror Rehearsal](#)

What are we to make of this? Is this just a remarkable coincidence? Proof of the the keen insight of advisors like Peter Power in correctly predicting the locations and times of likely terror attacks? Or something altogether different? And, if this was set up by some intelligence agency or someone with advance knowledge of the real attack, what would be the point? Why would they bother to schedule a drill "rehearsing the

event” at the same time as the event itself?

Just as there are various kinds of drills, war games and exercises, so, too, are there different ways that such simulations could be used to help facilitate an actual event. A drill could be used to distract security services and hinder responses, for example, thus helping an attack to succeed. Or the exercise could act as an alibi in case the plot is discovered before it can take place. Or, in an even more chilling scenario, a war game or training event could be used to recruit patsies who, believing they are only taking part in an exercise, unwittingly move people or equipment into place for a real attack.

KIMMY: Yes! I am the king! Numero uno, baby. Mmmm mmmm.

(The Gunmen walk over to Kimmy.)

BYERS: Find something?

KIMMY: Yep. I wound up in some government think-tank’s upload directory. Here’s your scenarios, ladies.

BYERS: It’s in clear. Counter-terrorism scenarios. War games developed for the Defense Department.

FROHIKE: What’s Scenario 12-D?

(Kimmy clicks on the file. A dialog box on the screen opens.)

FILE INFO

scenario_12D.txt

Domestic Airline In-Flight Terrorist Act

LANGLY: Airline terrorism? That doesn’t make sense. Your father was murdered over a war game?

BYERS: Download it.

SOURCE: [9/11 X-Files – The Lone Gunmen Pilot \(Predictive Programming\)](#)

Incredibly, the plot of the pilot episode of "[The Lone Gunmen](#)," a spin-off of the popular X-Files television program, aired in March 2001, depicted a scenario in which a group of government insiders piggy-backed on a military war game involving a hijacked airplane to remote control a civilian passenger jet into the World Trade Center.

BYERS SNR: *What the hell are you doing? Why can't you stay out of this. Leave me buried.*

BYERS: *What is scenario 12-D?*

(BYERS SNR doesn't respond.)

BYERS: *We know it's a war game scenario. That it has to do with airline counter-terrorism. Why is it important enough to kill for.*

BYERS SNR: *Because it's no longer a game.*

BYERS: *But if some terrorist group wants to act out this scenario, then why target you for assassination?*

BYERS SNR: *Depends on who your terrorists are.*

BYERS: *The men who conceived of it the first place. You're saying our government is planning to commit a terrorist act against a domestic airline?*

BYERS SNR: *There you go again. Blaming the entire government as usual. In fact, a small faction ...*

BYERS: *For what possible gain?*

BYERS SNR: *The Cold War's over, John. But with no clear enemy to stockpile against, the arms market's flat. But bring down a fully loaded 727 into the middle of New York City and you'll find a dozen tinpot dictators all over the world just clamoring to take responsibility, and begging to be smart-bombed.*

But as outlandish as this idea seems to those not immersed in military history or strategy, the idea of a war game “going live” is not limited to the world of fiction. In fact, it is a real and openly-acknowledged secret among military planners that such exercises can be used as an operational cover for a real attack. Reflecting on lessons learned from his tenure as Secretary of Defense under Ronald Reagan, Casper Weinberger [observed](#) that “the difference between a realistic exercise or maneuver and what could be preparations for an attack, that line is sometimes quite blurred.”

And Weinberger should know. It was under his watch that a “fictional” war game scenario brought the world to the brink of a very real global thermonuclear war.

In 1983, at the height of Cold War tensions over the Reagan Administration’s moves to increase the US nuclear arsenal and his [national security directive](#) calling for the ability to win a nuclear war, NATO decided to simulate a first-strike nuclear attack on the Soviet Union in an exercise dubbed “[Able Archer 83](#).” As recently declassified documents [show](#), the exercise was unprecedented in its scale and scope, even involving a very real radio-silent air lift of 19,000 US troops to Europe. So realistic was the build up of forces and the preparations for nuclear strikes during these “war games” that, as we now know from these documents kept hidden from the public for 30 years, Able Archer 83 very [nearly caused a real nuclear exchange](#).

But these concerns about war games going live did not end with the break up of the Soviet Union. On September 10, 2001, the Russian Air Force began a [week-long training exercise](#) over the North Atlantic, Pacific, and Arctic Oceans. The exercise simulated a Russian bombing attack in response to NATO aggression. On September 9, 2001, NORAD [announced](#) they would be deploying additional fighter aircraft to Forward Operating Locations in Alaska and Northern Canada to monitor the exercise and “ensure that our air sovereignty is maintained.” The Russians called off their war game when the 9/11 attacks

began to unfold.

Military planners know that simulations and war games can be used as cover for real attacks. But what about 9/11? Were there any exercises, simulations or drills that had a bearing on what was happening on that fateful day?

PART TWO – PREPARATIONS

In the wake of 9/11, the Bush Administration's mantra became that no one could have imagined such an attack before it took place.

***REPORTER:** Why shouldn't this be seen as an intelligence failure, that you were unable to predict something happening here?*

***CONDOLEEZZA RICE:** Steve, I don't think anybody could have predicted that these people would take an airplane and slam it into the World Trade Center, take another one and slam it into the Pentagon; that they would try to use an airplane as a missile, a hijacked airplane as a missile.*

***SOURCE:** [Press Briefing by National Security Advisor Dr. Condoleezza Rice, May 16, 2002](#)*

***DONALD RUMSFELD:** First, I must say, I know of no intelligence during the roughly six plus months leading up to September 11th that indicated terrorists intended to hijack commercial airliners and fly them into the Pentagon or the World Trade Towers. If we had had such information, we could have acted on it.*

***SOURCE:** [September 11 Commission: Defense](#)*

***GEORGE W. BUSH:** Nobody in our government, at least, and I don't think the prior government, could envision flying airplanes into buildings on such a massive scale.*

SOURCE: [President Addresses the Nation in Prime Time Press Conference, April 13, 2004](#)

But, like everything else the Bush Administration told the public about 9/11, this, too, was a lie. Not only had government officials “envisioned flying airplanes into buildings” or “using an airplane as a missile,” but multiple agencies trained for just such an event prior to 9/11. In fact, as General Richard Myers—Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff from 2001 to 2005—went on to [tell the 9/11 Commission](#), this precise scenario of a hijacked jet being flown into a high value target was drilled by NORAD not once or twice but five separate times in the run-up to September 11th.

On November 6th, 1999, they simulated an event in which terrorists hijacked a passenger jet flying out of JFK with the intention of crashing it into the United Nations building in New York.

On June 5th, 2000, they simulated two hijackings, one in which the terrorists intended to fly the plane into the Statue of Liberty, and the other in which the intended target was the White House.

An October 16th, 2000, NORAD drill saw a hijacker once again targeting the UN building, as did a nearly identical exercise on October 23rd of that year.

One of NORAD’s [pre-9/11 hijack drills](#) even saw the World Trade Center itself become the intended target.

Other exercises involved not just hijacked jets as weapons, but tested NORAD’s response to simultaneous hijackings being used in a coordinated attack on American airspace.

MR. BEN-VENISTE: *Well, obviously it would be hard to imagine posturing for the exact scenario. But isn’t it a fact, sir, that prior to September 11th, 2001, NORAD had already in the*

works plans to simulate in an exercise a simultaneous hijacking of two planes in the United States?

GEN. MCKINLEY: *Colonel Scott, do you have any data on that? I'm not aware of that, sir. I was not present at the time.*

MR. BEN-VENISTE: *That was Operation Amalgam Virgo.*

SOURCE: [Terrorist Attacks and Response](#)

Amalgam Virgo is an annual NORAD field training exercise, meaning that real aircraft are deployed and actual personnel are used to “simulate” real-life situations. The [planning document](#) for Amalgam Virgo 01, which took place in June 2001, featured a picture of Osama Bin Laden surrounded by airplanes. Amalgam Virgo 02, which was already in the planning stages on 9/11 and actually took place in June 2002, [involved a simulated hijacking](#) of a real Delta Airlines 757 by “military personnel acting as civilian passengers” and ran through multiple scenarios for stopping the plane from reaching its target, including a shoot down.

But as uncanny as these similarities are to real life events, [declassified documents](#) from the 9/11 Commission archive show that many other types of hijack scenarios were practiced in the three years before September 11th. These documents prove that many of the lies told about the “confused” response to the 9/11 attacks are just that: lies.

We have long been told, for instance, that NORAD wasn't set up to deal with a domestic hijacking threat because the agency was solely focused on outward threats.

RICHARD MYERS: *It's the way that we were directed to posture, looking outward. Those were the orders that NORAD had and has had for – ever since the end of the Soviet Union when we had at that time I think it was 26 alert sites around the United States and we'd gone down to seven.*

SOURCE: [September 11 Commission Hearing, June 17, 2004](#)

But time after time between 1999 and 2001, NORAD simulated so-called “inside-inside” events, where domestic airliners bound for domestic destinations were hijacked en route. General Myers simply lied when he said that NORAD’s defenses were only directed toward outside threats. As [these documents](#) show, NORAD was actively engaged in modeling domestic terror threats, not only domestic civilian airliner hijackings but even one scenario, dubbed “[Fertile Rice](#),” in which Osama bin Laden directed an attack on Washington using a drone aircraft laden with explosives.

And these were not the only pre-9/11 “training” events that bore a striking resemblance to the actual attacks. The specific scenario of a plane crashing into the Pentagon was drilled not just once or twice, but at least three separate times in the year prior to September 11th.

In October 2000, a [Pentagon mass casualty exercise](#), or “MASCAL,” envisioned a scenario in which a passenger jet hit the Pentagon. Army medics, the Arlington Fire Department and other emergency responders participated in the drill.

In May 2001, another Pentagon Mass Casualty Exercise tested responses to a passenger jet crashing into the Pentagon’s courtyard. [This time](#), the tri-Service DiLorenzo Health Care Clinic and the Air Force Flight Medicine Clinic participated in the training. Lieutenant Colonel John Felicio, deputy commander for administration of the DiLorenzo Tricare Health Clinic, [later remarked](#): “You know, it was kind of eerie. The scenario we had for these MASCALS was very similar to what actually happened. Our scenario for both MASCALS was a plane flying into the Pentagon courtyard.”

Then, in August 2001, just one month before 9/11, yet another Pentagon mass casualty exercise practiced building evacuation. As General Lance Lord, Commander of Air Force Space

Command, [later noted](#): “Purely a coincidence, the scenario for that exercise included a plane hitting the building.”

“Purely a coincidence.” Time after time after time after time after time in the months leading up to the attacks, military personnel and first responders were trained to respond to the very events that the public is asked to believe actually took place on the day of 9/11. Some of these training exercises even involved real aircraft being “pretend” hijacked by real military personnel “acting as civilian passengers.”

Purely a coincidence.

As we can see, the idea that no one could have predicted the attacks of September 11th is not just a lie, but an absurd lie. In fact, the sheer number of times those very scenarios were exercised before they took place by itself raises the question of what these war game planners knew about what was set to take place that day.

But as remarkable as all of these drills and exercises are, more remarkable still are the similarities between the events of 9/11 and the war games that we now know were taking place that very morning.

PART THREE – TRAINING DAY

Tuesday, September 11, 2001, dawns temperate and nearly cloudless in the eastern United States. A perfect day for aviation.

Meanwhile, all around the country, military personnel, first responders and government officials prepare for one of the busiest days of “simulated” terror in history.

In New York City, preparations continue for “[Operation Tripod](#),” an exercise run by the New York City Office of Emergency Management involving hundreds of personnel from FEMA and other disaster response agencies. The exercise simulates a

bioterrorist attack on New York, and on the morning of September 11th equipment is already in place at Pier 92—just four miles north-northwest of the Twin Towers—to treat the “victims” of this pretend attack.

***RUDY GIULIANI:** ... on September 12th, Pier 92 was going to have a drill. It had hundreds of people here from FEMA, from the Federal Government, from the State Emergency Management Office and they were getting ready for a drill for a bio-chemical attack. So that was going to be the place they were going to have the drill, the equipment was already there.*

SOURCE: [9/11 Commission Hearings May 19, 2004](#)

And on the 97th floor of the South Tower of the World Trade Center, a team of technology consultants who have flown in from California for the occasion are [running an emergency drill](#) in the offices of Fiduciary Trust.

Meanwhile in Washington, members of the 12th Aviation Battalion, [in charge of](#) “aviation support for the White House, US government officials, Department of Defense, Department of the Army, and other government agencies” are two hours away from their base, participating in their [annual weapons training](#).

12 miles south of the Pentagon, [Fort Belvoir](#) begins a garrison control exercise drilling the base on its response to a simulated terrorist attack.

Firefighters at [Fort Myer](#), just 1.5 miles from the Pentagon, are sitting down for an “aircraft crash refresher class.”

[Matthew Rosenberg](#)—an Army medic at the DiLorenzo TRICARE Health Clinic—sits down in Corridor 8 of the Pentagon to “study a new medical emergency disaster plan based on the unlikely scenario of an airplane crashing into the place.”

And in Chantilly, Virginia—just four miles from the runway of

Dulles Airport—the military and CIA personnel who staff the National Reconnaissance Office [are beginning an exercise](#) in which a plane crashes into their building.

Members of the Joint Special Operations Command (the US military's "top counterterrorism unit") [are in Hungary](#) preparing for "[Jackal Cave](#)," a highly-classified joint readiness exercise.

Fighter pilots [deployed to monitor](#) the Russian Air Force's training exercise in the Arctic are readying themselves for a day of maneuvers in Alaska and Northern Canada.

And at NORAD's combat operations center at the Cheyenne Mountain Complex in Colorado, military commanders are preparing for one of the busiest days of war games and exercises in the history of the United States.

***BARRIE ZWICKER:** Michael Ruppert is standing by at his office in Sherman Oaks, California. Michael, thanks for this. What is the reason for the failure of US military jets to show up in a timely fashion on 9/11?*

***MICHAEL RUPPERT:** Well, the simple fact is, Barrie, that they didn't know where to go. The reason that they didn't know where to go was because a number of conflicting and overlapping war game exercises were taking place, one of which, Northern Vigilance, had pulled a significant number of North American fighter aircraft into Canada and western Alaska and northern Alaska in a mock Cold War hijack exercise. There was another drill, Vigilant Guardian, which was a hijack exercise, a command post exercise, but it involved the insertion of false radar blips on to radar screens in the NorthEast Air Defense Sector. In addition we have a confirmation thanks to General Richard Myers who was acting Chairman of the Joint Chiefs who told Richard Clarke, as reported in Clarke's book, that there was another exercise, Vigilant Warrior, which was, in fact, according to*

a NORAD source a live fly hijack drill being conducted at the same time.

With only eight available fighter aircraft, and they have to be dispatched in pairs, they were dealing with as many as 22 possible hijacks on the day of 9/11 and they couldn't separate the war game exercises from the actual hijacks.

SOURCE: [The Great Deception](#)

Yes, on the morning of September 11, 2001, the stage was perfectly set for an unprecedented day of simulated terror throughout the northeastern United States.

And then it all happened for real.

PART FOUR – THIS IS NOT AN EXERCISE

08:37:52

BOSTON CENTER: *Hi. Boston Center T.M.U. [Traffic Management Unit], we have a problem here. We have a hijacked aircraft headed towards New York, and we need you guys to, we need someone to scramble some F-16s or something up there, help us out.*

POWELL: *Is this real-world or exercise?*

BOSTON CENTER: *No, this is not an exercise, not a test.*

SOURCE: [Vanity Fair](#)

Confusion.

08:52:40

NASYPANY: *This is what I got. Possible news that a 737 just hit the World Trade Center. **This is a real-world.** And we're trying to confirm this. Okay. Continue taking the fighters down to the New York City area, J.F.K. area, if you can. Make*

sure that the F.A.A. clears it— your route all the way through. Do what we gotta do, okay? Let's press with this. It looks like this guy could have hit the World Trade Center.

SOURCE: [Vanity Fair](#)

Chaos.

09:49

HERNDON CENTER: *Ah, do we wanna think about, ah, scrambling aircraft?*

FAA HEADQUARTERS: *Ah, (sighs) oh God, I don't know.*

HERNDON: *Uh, that's a decision someone is gonna have to make probably in the next 10 minutes.*

FAA HQ: *Uh, you know everybody just left the room.*

SOURCE: [Rutgers Law Review](#)

Paralysis.

There are many ways to describe the FAA, DoD and NORAD response to the events of 9/11. But given that, according to the official 9/11 conspiracy theory, not a single fighter jet was able to intercept a single hijacked airliner between the first hijacking report at 8:20 AM and Flight 93's downing nearly two hours later at 10:03 AM, the claim that the response to these events was actually *enhanced* by the war games and exercises taking place that morning is downright absurd.

REP. CYNTHIA MCKINNEY: *The question was we had four war games going on on September 11th, and the question that I tried to pose before the secretary had to go to lunch was whether or not activities of the four war games going on on September 11th actually impaired our ability to respond to the attacks.*

GEN. RICHARD MYERS: The answer to the question is no, it did not impair our response. In fact, General Eberhart, who was in the command of the North American Aerospace Defense Command, he testified in front of the 9/11 Commission, I believe—I believe—he told them that it enhanced our ability to respond, given that NORAD didn't have the overall responsibility for responding to the attacks that day. That was an FAA responsibility.

SOURCE: [Fiscal Year 2006 Defense Budget](#)

MR. ROEMER: General Eberhart, a question about our training posture on the day of 9/11. On page five of our Staff Statement, the FAA says at 8:38 in the morning, "Hi, Boston Center, TMU, we have a problem here. We have a hijacked aircraft headed towards New York and we need you guys to – we need someone to scramble some F-16s or something up there. Help us out." NEADS says, "Is this real world or an exercise?"

My question is, you were postured for an exercise against the former Soviet Union. Did that help or hurt? Did that help in terms of were more people prepared? Did you have more people ready? Were more fighters fueled with more fuel? Or did this hurt in terms of people thinking, "No, there's no possibility that this is real world; we're engaged in an exercise," and delay things? Or did it have both impacts?

GEN. EBERHART: Sir, my belief is that it helped because of the manning, because of the focus, because the crews – they have to be airborne in 15 minutes. And that morning, because of the exercise, they were airborne in six or eight minutes. And so I believe that focus helped.

The situation that you're referring to, I think, at most cost us 30 seconds – 30 seconds.

SOURCE: [September 11 Commission Hearing, June 17, 2004](#)

These lies have been carefully crafted over years and presented in such densely-packed soundbites that it is difficult to deconstruct them all.

General Myers' assertion that it was not NORAD but the FAA that had the responsibility to respond to the attacks that morning is one such lie. In reality, NORAD is specifically tasked with dealing with such events itself, not waiting passively for FAA orders. NORAD's own [regulations for dealing with hijacked jets](#) specifically state that "FAA Authorization for Interceptor Operations is not used for intercept and airborne surveillance of hijacked aircraft within the [continental United States]."

And General Eberhart's assertion that the confusion over whether the events that were unfolding were real world events or merely exercises "cost us 30 seconds" is belied by the actual audio recordings of the FAA and NORAD response that morning. Time and time again throughout the entire morning, air traffic controllers and military operators are forced to clarify that the events being reported are not part of an exercise.

08:37:52

BOSTON CENTER: *Hi. Boston Center T.M.U. [Traffic Management Unit], we have a problem here. We have a hijacked aircraft headed towards New York, and we need you guys to, we need someone to scramble some F-16s or something up there, help us out.*

POWELL: *Is this real-world or exercise?*

BOSTON CENTER: *No, this is not an exercise, not a test.*

SOURCE: [Vanity Fair](#)

08:37:56

WATSON: *What?*

DOOLEY: *Whoa!*

WATSON: *What was that?*

ROUNTREE: *Is that real-world?*

DOOLEY: *Real-world hijack.*

WATSON: *Cool!*

SOURCE: [Vanity Fair](#)

08:42:59

NASYPANY: *Fourteen forty three, look for it, right there, ok, mode three, fourteen forty three, last known. No, this is **real world**. Ok, we're in the high chair.*

SOURCE: [Rutgers Law Review](#)

08:43:06

FOX: *I've never seen so much **real-world stuff** happen **during an exercise**.*

SOURCE: [Vanity Fair](#)

08:57:11

NASYPANY: *Think we put **the exercise** on the hold. What do you think? [Laughter.]*

SOURCE: [DRM1_DAT2_Channel2_MCC_Op](#) [[TRANSCRIPT](#)]

This persistent confusion over the reality of what was happening that day is hardly surprising. Although the exact details are still shrouded under a cloud of official secrecy, on the morning of 9/11 NORAD was in the middle of a week-long war game that “coincidentally” included simulated hijackings of passenger jets.

“Vigilant Guardian” is an annual command post exercise involving all levels of NORAD command. Vigilant Guardian 01 was a week-long war game described as a “simulated air war,” and, just [two days before 9/11](#), it had involved a simulated terrorist hijacking of a civilian passenger jet by terrorists intending to blow the plane up with explosives over New York City. Even more remarkably, on the very morning of September 11th, they were planning to simulate another passenger jet hijacking just one hour after the attacks began to unfold.

In 2006, *Vanity Fair* reporter Michael Bronner was the first journalist given access to the tapes of NORAD operations that morning. In his subsequent article on the subject, “[9/11 Live: The NORAD Tapes](#),” Bronner talked to Lieutenant Colonel Kevin Nasypany, the mission-crew commander on the “ops” floor at the Northeast Air Defense Sector on the morning of 9/11.

“When they told me there was a hijack, my first reaction was ‘Somebody started the exercise early,’” Nasypany later told me. The day’s exercise was designed to run a range of scenarios, including a “traditional” simulated hijack in which politically motivated perpetrators commandeer an aircraft, land on a Cuba-like island, and seek asylum. “I actually said out loud, ‘The hijack’s not supposed to be for another hour,’” Nasypany recalled.

As a command post exercise, Vigilant Guardian was not conducted with real airplanes but what’s known as “sim over live,” where simulated aircraft are injected into NORAD’s air traffic system. Although the official narrative holds that the simulated injects were cleared from NORAD’s radars as soon as they appeared, thus causing no confusion, the actual NORAD tapes tell a different story.

At 9:04 AM, directly after Flight 175 crashed into the South Tower, two officers monitoring the events at NORAD’s Northeast Air Defense Sector (NEADS) can be heard to refer to the events

as potential exercise “inputs.”

09:04:50

SPEAKER 1: *Is this explosion part of that that we're lookin' at now on TV?*

SPEAKER 2: *Yes.*

SPEAKER 1: *Jesus ...*

SPEAKER 2: *And there's a possible second hijack also—a United Airlines ...*

SPEAKER 1: *Two planes?...*

SPEAKER 2: *Get the fuck out ...*

SPEAKER 1: *I think this is a damn input, to be honest.*

SOURCE: [Vanity Fair](#)

At 9:09 AM, one NEADS technician complains about the exercises taking place and the confusion with real world events.

BACKGROUND MALE SPEAKER: *Langley's on battle stations.*

FEMALE SPEAKER: *Fuck.*

FEMALE SPEAKER 2: *What?*

BACKGROUND MALE SPEAKER: *Battle stations.*

FEMALE SPEAKER: *Langley.*

FEMALE SPEAKER: *LFI.*

FEMALE SPEAKER: *I know. I hope they cancel the exercise, because this is ridiculous.*

SOURCE: [DRM1_DAT2_Channel_4_ID_0p](#) [[TRANSCRIPT](#)]

And at 9:15 AM, an off-duty NEADS technician calls in to ask about the day's events and the ongoing exercise.

SGT. ZUBON: *You guys watching the news?*

NEADS TECHNICIAN: *Yeah, they've got it on in the battlecab right now.*

ZUBON: *Oh, do they?*

NEADS: *Yeah.*

ZUBON: *Yeah, I've been watching it for about ten minutes, and I said "I wonder if they're—**did they suspend the exercise?**"*

NEADS: *Not at this time, no.*

ZUBON: *Not yet?*

NEADS: *But I think they're going to. I don't know. (Laughing).*

ZUBON: *Yeah, I would imagine.*

NEADS: *Things look pretty horrific out there.*

SOURCE: [0915 Not at this time](#)

Remarkably, at 9:30 AM, a full hour and ten minutes into the attacks, simulated aircraft were still being injected into the radar screens at NEADS. One frustrated staff member directing the response on the NEADS operations floor had to order his coworkers to "turn their sim switches off," stopping the fake simulations from confusing the radar operators.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: *You know what, let's get rid of this goddamn sim. **Turn your sim switches off.** Let's get rid of that crap.*

SOURCE: [RM1_DAT2_Channel2_MCC_Op \[TRANSCRIPT\]](#)

Even worse, at the same time as these false inputs were distracting the radar operators, real military aircraft that are taking part in the live-fly exercises that day are further complicating the response to the attacks.

MALE SPEAKER: *Boston Center T.M.U., yeah, we've got a question for you.*

BACKGROUND MALE: *Yes, sir.*

MALE SPEAKER 1: *We're wondering if we should tell them to return to Base if they're just on training missions, or what you guys—*

BACKGROUND MALE: *No, no. They're actually on the active air per the D0 out there.*

BACKGROUND MALE: *Is this guy launched (inaudible)?*

BACKGROUND MALE: *Everybody's who's up, you want them up?*

BACKGROUND MALE: *Yes, we did send the ones home that were on the training mission.*

BACKGROUND MALE: *OK.*

BACKGROUND MALE: *They are sent home.*

(Simultaneous background conversations)

BACKGROUND MALE: *But the Pantas are out there from Otis.*

MALE SPEAKER: *Right. I understand that. I'm talking about— I think there's somebody training up in the Falcon Acts area right now.*

BACKGROUND MALE: *No.*

BACKGROUND MALE: *Falcon. Stand by. Let me—*

MALE SPEAKER: *Just in general anybody that's training.*

BACKGROUND MALE: Anybody in training, send them home?
Missions are Falcon send them home?

BACKGROUND MALE: Right.

BACKGROUND MALE: Yeah, go ahead and send them home.

MALE SPEAKER: OK, fine.

SOURCE: [RM1_DAT2_Channel2_MCC_Op](#) [[TRANSCRIPT](#)]

Even more incredibly, false radar injects continued to show up on radar screens at NORAD's Operations Center in Cheyenne Mountain, Colorado, at 10:12 AM, a full nine minutes *after* the attacks had ended.

CAPT. BRIAN NAGEL: Sim...or, sorry, northeast weapons.

CAPT. TAYLOR: Hello, this is Captain Taylor calling from Cheyenne Mountain test control.

NAGEL: Yes.

TAYLOR: What we need you to do right now is to terminate all exercise inputs coming into Cheyenne Mountain.

NAGEL: Yes. Can you call 6180 extension for that, please?

TAYLOR: 6180?

NAGEL: You bet, he'll give you that.

TAYLOR: I'll do that.

NAGEL: OK, thank you.

SOURCE: [DRM2_DAT1_Channel_20_SD2_TK.zip](#) [[TRANSCRIPT](#)]

In the face of this overwhelming documentary evidence that the exercises taking place that morning were a persistent source of distraction that significantly complicated response

efforts, the retort of the 9/11 Commission and its proponents that these false radar blips were a minor issue that “at most cost us 30 seconds” rings exceedingly hollow.

But that official story becomes even more implausible when it is learned that air traffic controllers and military personnel were not responding to four, clearly reported hijacked aircraft, as the public now imagines it, but as many as [29 potential hijackings](#).

MAJ. GEN. LARRY ARNOLD: We were in the process of launching aircraft all over the country during that timeframe. We had multiple aircraft called hijacked all over the country.

SOURCE: [September 11 Commission Hearing, June 17, 2004](#)

GEN. MYERS: In fact, as General Arnold said, we fought many phantoms that day. [...] We got many aircraft calls inbound that morning that turned out to be phantoms.

SOURCE: [September 11 Commission Hearing, June 17, 2004](#)

These false reports included:

- **United Airlines Flight 177**, which was inexplicably [reported as hijacked at 9:25 AM](#) despite still being on the ground at Boston’s Logan International Airport.
- **[Delta 1989](#)**, a 767 flying from Boston to Los Angeles that was repeatedly identified as suspicious on the morning of 9/11 and ordered to land at a secure, remote area of Cleveland Hopkins Airport, where the pilot signalled “all clear” to the SWAT team outside the plane with blood running down his face.
- **[Continental Airlines Flight 321](#)**, which had inexplicably “squawked” the hijack code from the plane’s transponder three times before being safely brought down in Peoria.
- **[KAL 85](#)**, en route from Seoul, South Korea to New York,

which inexplicably sent “[five separate and ongoing indicators of a hijacking situation](#)” before being intercepted by NORAD fighters over Alaska and directed to land at Whitehorse in northern Canada or be shot down.

- And [literally dozens](#) of other suspicious aircraft, inexplicable hijack indicators, false reports of planes that “never existed,” and other bizarre incidents, some of which have still never been explained to the public to this day.

But the most baffling of all of these reports involved American Airlines Flight 11, the Boeing 767 en route from Boston to Los Angeles that, according to the official government conspiracy theory, was hijacked by Mohamed Atta and flown into the North Tower of the World Trade Center.

Incredibly, air traffic controllers and military fighter jets spent much of the crucial time in the midst of the 9/11 attacks dealing with a completely false report that Flight 11 had not crashed into the World Trade Center at all, but was instead still airborne and heading towards Washington.

***COLIN SCOGGINS:** Scoggins, (FAA) military (operations specialist), 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 TECHNICIAN:** American 11 is still in the air–*

***SCOGGINS:** Yes.*

***NEADS:** –on its way towards Washington?*

***SCOGGINS:** It was another aircraft that hit the tower. That's the latest report we have.*

***NEADS:** Okay.*

***SCOGGINS:** I'm going to try to confirm an ID for you, but I*

would assume he's somewhere over either New Jersey or somewhere further south.

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

SCOGGINS: No, he is a hijack.

NEADS: American 11 is a hijack?

SCOGGINS: Yes.

NEADS: And he's going into Washington.

SCOGGINS: This could be a third aircraft.

SOURCE: [NEADS Tapes: The "Phantom Flight 11 Call" on 9/11](#)

This completely false report, phoned in by FAA military operations specialist Colin Scoggins, further confused the already overwhelmed NEADS technicians. In response, NEADS Mission Crew Commander Kevin Nasypany scrambled some of the only fighters in the entire defense sector to chase after this phantom flight.

09:21:50

NASYPANY: O.K. American Airlines is still airborne—11, the first guy. He's heading towards Washington. O.K., I think we need to scramble Langley right now. And I'm—I'm gonna take the fighters from Otis and try to chase this guy down if I can find him.

SOURCE: [Vanity Fair](#)

So confusing was this series of events that even years later at the 9/11 Commission hearings, both commissioners and military commanders struggled to even communicate about the problem itself, let alone determine how such a false report

persisted for so long.

MR. KEAN: *Commissioner Gorelick.*

MS. GORELICK: *A couple of follow-up questions. First, for General Arnold, you testified before us before that the jets were scrambled in response to Flight 93, not American 11, and when you were asked about—*

GEN. ARNOLD: *I was wrong. I was wrong.*

MS. GORELICK: *Yeah. But—but the question about that is, and I want to be fair to you and give you an opportunity to respond, you said that the reason that you were wrong was that you hadn't had an opportunity to listen to the tapes, or the tapes were not accessible. But, I mean, we have—I'm just holding four of them — different headquarters and CONR logs that are—that clearly reflect that the scrambling was done in response to this phantom American 11, which didn't exist anymore. And it was responsibility, as I recall, to do the after-action report, or to lead it, or to be in part responsible for it. Did you not look at the logs in that process?*

GEN. ARNOLD: *Well, you refer to an after-action report that I was—that we didn't do. I mean, I don't recall doing an after-action report—*

SOURCE: [September 11 Commission Hearing, June 17, 2004](#)

MR. BEN-VENISTE: *Why did no one mention the false report received from FAA that Flight 11 was heading south during your initial appearance before the 9/11 Commission back in May of last year? And why was there no report to us that contrary to the statements made at the time, that there had been no notification to NORAD that Flight 77 was a hijack?*

GEN. LARRY ARNOLD: *Well, the first part of your question—Mr. Commissioner, first of all, I would like to say that a lot of*

the information that you have found out in your study of this of this 9/11, the things that happened on that day, helped us reconstruct what was going on.

And if you're talking about the American 11, in particular, the call of American 11, is that what you are referring to?

MR. BEN-VENISTE: Yes.

GEN. ARNOLD: The American 11, that was—call after it had impacted, is that what you're referring to?

MR. BEN-VENISTE: No. I'm talking about the fact that there was miscommunication that Flight 11 was still heading south instead of having impacted—

GEN. ARNOLD: That's what I'm referring to. That's correct.

[...]

MR. BEN-VENISTE: General, is it not a fact that the failure to call our attention to the miscommunication and the notion of a phantom Flight 11 continuing from New York City south in fact skewed the whole reporting of 9/11, it skewed the official Air Force report, which is contained in a book called "The Air War Over America," which does not contain any information about the fact that you were following, or thinking of a continuation of Flight 11, and that you had not received notification that Flight 77 had been hijacked?

GEN. ARNOLD: Well, as I recall, first of all, I didn't know the call signs of the airplanes when these things happened. When the call came that American 11 was possible hijacked aircraft, that aircraft just led me to come to the conclusion that there were other aircraft in the system that were a threat to the United States.

SOURCE: [September 11 Commission Hearing, June 17, 2004](#)

PHILIP ZELIKOW: *In their testimony, and in other public statements, NORAD officials also stated that the Langley fighters were scrambled to respond to the notifications about American 77 and/or United 93. These statements were incorrect as well. The report of American 11 heading south as the cause of the Langley scramble is reflected not just in taped conversations at NEADS, but in taped conversations in FAA centers, on chat logs compiled at NEADS, continental region headquarters, and NORAD, and in other records. Yet this response to a phantom aircraft, American 11, is not recounted in a single public timeline or statement issued by FAA or DOD. Instead, since 9/11, the scramble of the Langley fighters has been described as a response to the reported hijacking of American 77, or United 93, or some combination of the two. This inaccurate account created the appearance that the Langley scramble was a logical response to an actual hijacked aircraft.*

SOURCE: [September 11 Commission Hearing, June 17, 2004](#)

False radar inputs. Military aircraft participating in exercises in the middle of a crisis. Civilian aircraft squawking false hijack reports. Fighter jets chasing phantom planes.

Which of these reports were merely the “fog of war” so often referred to by promoters of the official 9/11 story, and which were part of the exercise themselves? Were there field exercises of hijackings taking place that morning that were then mistaken for the real thing? What part did these war games and exercises play in hampering the response of the many military officers who had spent their whole careers training to protect American airspace?

Did the war games help the perpetrators of 9/11 in their attack?

The answers to these questions, like so many other questions

about the events of September 11th, remain shrouded under a veil of official government secrecy.

PART FIVE: BEYOND COINCIDENCE

“Purely a coincidence.”

According to the official story of 9/11 itself, we are told that simulated hijackings were taking place at the same time as real-life hijackings. That an airplane-into-building drill was occurring at the same time as airplanes were flying into buildings. That false radar blips and fake hijack reports were competing for the military’s attention with real-world radar blips and hijack reports. And throughout it all, technicians, operators, military personnel and air traffic controllers were constantly seeking reassurance that what they were seeing was not part of an exercise.

Purely a coincidence? Or part of a pre-meditated plan?

And if this unprecedented tangle of exercises, drills and simulations was part of a pre-meditated plan, what was that plan? What would be the point of simulating the attacks even as the attacks themselves were taking place?

***MICHAEL RUPPERT:** For me, the pivotal evidence absolutely demonstrating direct government complicity in and management of the attacks was found in a number of undisputed yet virtually unaddressed war games that I have shown were being conducted, coordinated, and/or controlled by Vice President Dick Cheney or his immediate staff on the morning of September the 11th.*

The names of those wargames are known to include: Vigilant Guardian, Vigilant Warrior, Northern Guardian, Northern Vigilance, and Tripod. There is a possibility that Northern Guardian is a duplicate name, but the remaining exercises are indisputably separate events with different objectives. All have been reported by major press organizations relying on

undisputed quotes from participating military and FAA personnel. They have also been confirmed by NORAD press releases. All, except for Northern Vigilance and Tripod II, had to do with hijacked airliners inside the continental United States, specifically within the northeast air defense sector or NEADS, where all four 9/11 hijackings occurred.

According to a clear record, some of these exercises involve commercial airline hijackings. In some cases, false blips or “injects” were deliberately inserted into FAA and military radar screens, and they were present during at least the first attacks. This effectively paralyzed fighter response because with only eight fighters available in the region, there were as many as 22 possible hijackings taking place.

Other exercises, specifically Northern Vigilance, had pulled significant fighter resources away from the northeast US just before 9/11 into northern Canada and Alaska. In addition, a close reading of key news stories published in the spring of 2004 revealed for the first time that some of these drills were live-fly exercises, where actual aircraft—likely flown by remote control—were simulating the behavior of hijacked airliners in real life. All of this as the real attacks began.

The fact that these exercises have never been systematically and thoroughly explored in the mainstream press or publicly by Congress—or at least publicly in any detail whatsoever by this so-called “independent” 9/11 Commission—made me think that they might be the holy grail of 9/11. And that’s exactly what they turned out to be.

Only one war game exercise, Vigilant Guardian, was mentioned in a footnote to the Kean Commission report, and then it was deliberately mislabeled as an exercise intended to intercept Russian bombers instead of a hijack exercise in the northeast sector. Even then a deliberate lie was told to the American people as NORAD commander General Ralph Eberhart testified to

the Commission that the exercise actually expedited US Air Force response during the attacks.

Before the Commission's final hearing I undertook a direct investigation in an attempt to learn more details about each of the exercises and specifically who was controlling them or had planned them to take place on September the 11th, where it's abundantly clear based upon the record of statements made by the US Air Force and FAA personnel that the games had effectively paralyzed fighter response during the attacks.

SOURCE: [9/11 Omission Hearings – Michael Ruppert On Dick Cheney – 9/9/2004](#)

The exercises taking place on 9/11 could only be to the benefit of the attackers. No stand down order would have kept any dedicated fighter pilot worth his salt grounded during the only attack on his country's air space in his lifetime. But if those fighter pilots and their commanders had no idea what was real and what was fake, what was an actual threat and what was just a phantom blip, then their response could be effectively contained.

And it was. The utter "failure" of the air response that morning is proof of that.

But if the simulations and war games on the morning of 9/11 were part of a pre-meditated plan on the part of the attackers, then the obvious question is who were the attackers? Are we to believe that the dastardly Al Qaeda masterminds *not only* perpetrated the simultaneous hijacking of four civilian airliners, turning off the plane's transponders and putting them through a series of maneuvers that even advanced pilots could not replicate to hit their targets with pinpoint accuracy, *but also* penetrated the command structure of the US military and NORAD itself to direct the planning and scheduling of simultaneous war games mirroring their own plot to confuse the air response to the attacks?

Because if that sounds like outlandish comic book fantasy, then there is only one other possible conclusion: That members of the National Command Authority, the US military and NORAD in a position to plan and schedule such exercises were the attackers themselves.

BYERS: *What is scenario 12-D?*

(BYERS SNR doesn't respond.)

BYERS: *We know it's a war game scenario. That it has to do with airline counter-terrorism. Why is it important enough to kill for.*

BYERS SNR: *Because it's no longer a game.*

BYERS: *But if some terrorist group wants to act out this scenario, then why target you for assassination?*

BYERS SNR: *Depends on who your terrorists are.*

BYERS: *The men who conceived of it the first place. You're saying our government is planning to commit a terrorist act against a domestic airline?*

BYERS SNR: *There you go again. Blaming the entire government as usual. In fact, a small faction ...*

BYERS: *For what possible gain?*

BYERS SNR: *The Cold War's over, John. But with no clear enemy to stockpile against, the arms market's flat. But bring down a fully loaded 727 into the middle of New York City and you'll find a dozen tinpot dictators all over the world just clamoring to take responsibility, and begging to be smart-bombed.*

But that's "just fiction" and the fact that it all happened in real life a few months later is just another "pure coincidence."

The truth of what happened that morning would be remarkably easy to come to if those involved in the planning and execution of the day's training events were to open the records and allow independent examination of the precise situations that were being trained that day, how those scenarios were arrived at, who planned them, who was in charge of them, what radar injects and false reports and live-fly simulations were taking place, how these exercise inputs were relayed to technicians and air traffic controllers, and what steps were taken at what times to allow those events to continue even as the attacks they were supposed to be simulating were actually happening in real life.

But we shouldn't expect the guilty parties to indict themselves, and so it is no surprise at all that the official government investigation into 9/11 studiously avoided facing any of these issues head on.

***VOICE FROM AUDIENCE:** Ask about the war games that were planned for 9-11.*

***MR. KEAN:** Commissioner Gorelick.*

***MS. GORELICK:** Um.*

***VOICE FROM AUDIENCE:** Tell us about the 9-11 war games.*

***MS. GORELICK:** Could you please be quiet, we only have a few minutes with General Myers, and I would like to ask a question.*

***VOICE FROM AUDIENCE:** Tell us about the war games.*

***MS. GORELICK:** I'm sorry.*

***MR. KEAN:** I would ask please for the people in the audience to be quiet if you want to stay here.*

***SOURCE:** [9/11 Commission hearing June 17, 2004](#)*

So what does it mean when a simulation of a catastrophic and catalyzing event takes place at the exact same place and time as that event is happening in real life?

This is one of the many crucial questions of 9/11 that have been swept under the rug over the past 17 years. But it is not a rhetorical question. It is a very real question with a very real answer. And until that question is answered, we will never find justice for the victims of 9/11.

FOX:** I've never seen so much **real-world stuff** happen **during an exercise.