

EGYPT AIR FLIGHT 990

31Oct99

HSC Patricia A. Golden

Prolog:

In my 22years of experience in the United States Coast Guard, never would I have imagined that I would be a participant in two major airline crashes, TWA Flight 800, on 17 JUL96, and now EGYPT AIR 990, which occurred on 31Oct99. As with TWA FLIGHT 800, and the five months of participation, representation, role, and mission of the Coast Guard Medical Department at Group Moriches. I have strived to perfect the “Lesson’s Learned” of that tragedy, so that the impact, and trauma of recovery to our Coast Guard crews would be minimal if this were to happen again, and that the “mission” of our Medical Department, within the Coast Guard structure would “stand proud” knowing that we did all that we could possible in the recovery process.

After TWA Flight 800, I was transferred to Air Station Cape Cod. Knowing that I would be an integral part of the Cape Cod Community, and that our ambulance is part of the Cape Cod Emergency Medical “911” System. I felt I owed it to our flight crews at the Air Station and our community to know all the resources that were available to us, in case another air tragedy occurred here at Otis or at sea like Flight 800.

In the two years of networking within the civilian medical community, and becoming a member of the Cape & Islands Emergency Medical Training and Operations System. I had the opportunity to meet many important individuals that “if needed” would support our Coast Guard mission and to assist us if requested. In my opinion only, “I firmly believe there is a sequence of events that takes place in our daily lives and that we meet those individual for a purpose. Nothing happens by chance.”

“Our medical mission does not end at the pier when our ships pull in. I believe from past experience that a sequence of events must take place to complete our mission during the first 48 critical hours following an air tragedy at sea. When I am asked to lecture to the Emergency Medical Community about the Coast Guards participation in TWA Flight 800. The best way I can describe our participation with the many different agencies involved, is in this manner:

“We become an orchestrated symphony, we each must play our own sheet of music and work in harmony with one another.”

I feel training and sharing of information to our Coast Guard medical family is important. Therefore, I would like to share my experience of the Crash of EGYPT AIR 990, and show how through networking with different agencies, how events and people play an important role in completing our mission. I did not keep a time line with TWA Flight 800 and it's took me over a year to complete that story line, however I did with this one. Below are the events in which they occurred, my involvement in the process, and the importance of communication, within the medical structure of the different agencies.

SUNDAY 31 OCT 99

0630: Received a call from Kaehler Memorial Medical Clinic, HS2 Thomson, conveying that Group Woodhole, LT Jaramillow, would like me to call him.

0635: Contacted Group Woodhole, LT Jaramillow stated “That Egypt Air Flight 990 had gone down 60 off of Nantucket at about 0330, and that our cutters were just arriving on scene. They are not sure at this time if there were any survivors, and that the Unified Command Post (UCP) was being set up at Air Station Cape Cod.” He's also stated, “That he requested my help because he knew of my involvement with TWA 800.” I thanked him for his consideration and requested that he contact my XO, CDR Griener to inform him that my presence was requested. I also stated, “That I would begin to make my contact calls within the Cape and Islands Structure to set the wheels in motion for the possible recovery of live patients, or the transfer of human remains (HR), at dockside.”

0658: Contacted Larry Heidenberg, Assistant Director Cape and Islands Emergency Medical Service System. I repeated to him LT Jaramillow and my conversation about Egypt Air 990, and requested that he call him for an update. I also conveyed to him that I needed to contact the Medical Examiner Office (M.E.), as we needed more disaster bags, (BB's) for our cutters, and that the clinic only had 12.

0658 and 0750: Several phone calls were placed and received by me to the clinic, CAPT Burkett, and Larry Heidenberg.

0820: Received phone call from Operations, Air Station Cape Cod, requesting me to come in. I told them that I was on my way.

0825: Arrived at the Operations Center, Air Sta Cape Cod, made a return phone call to Larry Heidenberg and told him I would meet with him in the Unified Command Post (UCP).

0915: Contacted Group WoodsHole, spoke with the HS2 Melissa Cohen, and asked about Disaster Bags and where HSC Dave Soby was. The HS2 Cohen stated that they had received several BB's from Falmouth and Cape Cod Hospital, and that HSC Soby was on his way to the Group.

1030: Larry Heidenberg and myself were dispatched by the UCP to the Medical Examiner's office in Pocasset, to pick up more BB's, and to figure out a plan if the cutters came into Group's Woodhole.

1045: Arrived at Medical Examiner's, Dr. James Weiner, introduced me to the Medical Examiner representative from Boston, who was also there. Dr. Weiner, explained he did not have the facility to handle the amount of HR's, and the Boston Office had six tables. The problem would be to transport the HR's to the Boston Office.

*******While I was speaking with Dr. Weiner, ICS Boston called on the phone. CDR Ed LaBlanc asked to speak with me. I told him the resources that the M.E. had, and I felt it necessary to activate the Disaster Mortuary Team, to help with the process of identification and DNA testing. I stated to him that it was my understanding from the Group that the cutters would be pulling into the Group. He stated that was not correct and that RADM Larrabee had not made any decision yet, and that this whole process could move to Rhode Island. I advised him of the importance of having one central figurehead covering the medical portion of the crash, so that several different people would not duplicate efforts.

1130: Left the Medical Examiner's Office with Dr. Weiner, he wanted to see where the U.C.P. at the Air Station was. He also had 150 more BB's to give us.

1230: Arrived back at the U.C.P. Introduced Dr. Weiner to key individuals, the word was passed that the U. C. P. would possibly be moving to Rhode Island. Dr. Weiner left, and stated to keep him informed.

1230 and 1330: Had several conversations with key individuals, FBI, NTSB, about the process and recovery of debris and that I felt it important to activate the Disaster Mortuary Team (D-MORT). Due to volume of HR's that might be recovered, and DNA testing.

1330: CAPT Webster holds a meeting with key personal of the U.C. P., CDR Olsen stated I should attend. I did, and gave my input to

the process. Once again stressing the importance of the activation of the Disaster Mortuary Team.

1415: CAPT Webster announces that the U.C. P. will be moved to Rhode Island.

1430: Thanked Larry Heidenberg from Cape & Islands EMS for coming.

1445: Spoke with the Massachusetts Emergency Management Office about getting me the phone number to the Rhode Island Medical Examiner so I could give it to the FBI.

1500: HSC Soby arrived at the U.C.P. he will move several BB's to the Helo pad for transport to the cutters.

***Spoke with CDR Olsen, told him that I wasn't sure if I should go home or stay. He contacted CDR La Blanc, I was to meet him at the new U.C. P. in Rhode Island for 1900.

1700: Left for Rhode Island.

1845: Arrived at the U.C. P. met Christine Sullivan, CDR La Blanc, CDR McKenzie and HSC Jon Klages from the Office of Health and Safety D1.

1900-2300: Had several conversations with the Rhode Island, Medical Examiner, Dr. Elizabeth Lapasada, she had several questions for me, about what to expect, how much, how the ships would arrive with the debris, and how the H.R.'s would be, (covered or not). Tried to answer all her questions, so her team would be better prepared, and that I wouldn't leave her side until the Disaster Mortuary Team arrived. She thanked me for being there.

2315: Met with Jon Aucott, Program Manager for R.I. Emergency Management Agency. (Also A CG Res Officer), He brought HSC Soby, HSC Klages, and myself, up to date on where the cutters would be pulling into the Davisville pier.

2330-0015: Jon Aucott, introduced us to Eric Grosf, Incident Specialist with the NTSB. We also spoke to RADM Larrabee. After introductions to the Admiral, a phone conference was held between Eric Grosf (NTSB), HSC Soby, HSC Klages, Jon Aucott, and myself with Dr. Lapasada, to discuss the arrival of the first cutter at Davisville pier, at 0700 the Coast Guard Cutter Monomoy. Once plans were in place for her arrival, and they were reviewed by Dr. Lapasada, we decided to meet at the pier for 0630, we departed for our rooms about 0100.

MONDAY 1 NOV 99

0430: Up and about, departed for the Davisville pier at 0530.

0630: Arrived at the Davisville pier.

0640: Introductions between Dr. Lapasada, her team comprising of 4 members and myself. Once again Dr. Lapasada wanted more information on the cutters and how they would be coming in. How the HR's would be covered and how much. I told her that if any remains would come in, they hopefully would have them in BB'S but knowing the resources the ships have, I'm sure they would be in garbage bags. I also stated to her that every piece of wreckage would have to be looked at for tissue. Before the arrival of the ship, a handful of FBI agents arrived along with Eric Grosf (NTSB), Ronald Price with the NTSB (dock coordinator), many of us knew each other from TWA, which made the process go that much easier.

0710: CGC Monomoy arrives. Assisted the M.E.'s office with the set up of sheets on the pier. Problem came in where the tide was out and the ship was very low, the off loading was a slow process, HSC Soby boarded the boat to check on the crew. I donned a bio-hazard protection suit, and assisted the M.E. and the FBI with the process of the off loading of debris and HR's. (Our order from CAPT Webster, was to off load as fast as possible so the crew could go home). HSC Soby assured him that would be done even if it meant us helping in that process. This process took several hours.

1200: HSC Soby reported to me, the crew had to have HEP B vaccination and one possible gamma globulin injection, I contacted KMMC and informed CAPT Burkett, that the crew needed injections, I requested a PA be present on the dock when the ship pulled into Woodshole.

1200: Informed that the next ship due in was the CGC Hammerhead at 2000. Eric Grosf informed me that the Disaster MORT team would be on board around early afternoon. With the off loading done on the Monomoy, I headed to the gym. Two miles up the road from the pier. The problem was getting the HR's from the pier to the gym. Building across from the gym was going to be used to house the HR's until the gym was ready. Problem was; the contractor needed to remove the gym floor.

1300: At the request of Eric Grosf (NTSB), I met with members of the Disaster Mortuary Team, and the R.I. Disaster Team, (Gary Kleinman Emergency Coordinator for Region 1, whom I worked with, during the 99 Air Show at Otis. My role was to give input into the process of the recovery from the Coast Guard. A briefing in the gym

was held between Dr. Lapasada, Gary Kleinman (R.I.), Eric Grosf (NTSB), Thomas Shepardson, (Commander, D-MORT Team), Stanley Moody (FBI agent in charge of the operation), and myself. Once this meeting was completed and the next ship due in about 2000, I went back to the pier to find HSC Soby and HS1 Morris. They wanted to see the gym, so we proceeded back to the gym and I made introductions to the key players. After this was done HSC Soby, HS1 Morris and myself headed back to the Unified Command Post at the Navy Base in R.I.

1600: Entered the U.C.P. in R. I. Met with CDR La Blanc, tried to explain the process and that my job doesn't end at the pier. I also spoke with RADM Larrabee, he wanted a full update on the Monomoy and what was happening on the pier. Informed him what I had done thus far and that the process was slow, but getting done.

1800: Headed back to Davisville. Awaited arrival of the Hammerhead. Stopped by the gym to check on Gary Kleinman and the D-MORT Team, they were still waiting for the contractor to remove gym floor. But doing as much as they could to set up. Arrived at the pier. By this time the rest of the FBI agents had shown up, they were now ready to receive the contents of the Hammerhead. HSC Soby and I requested that they do not swarm the ship, but wait until the Commanding Officer, stated it was ok to come aboard. We did not want the ships crew feeling overwhelmed, also we did not want their crews touching anymore of the debris, we requested the M.E. or FBI remove it.

2000: CGC Hammerhead arrives at the pier. A crane was brought in to off load debris. Which was placed next to the Medical Examiner, tables had been set up to ease their backs, Wayne Aldrich, the Senior Medical Scene Investigator, now took the place of Dr. Lapasada. Once again HSC Soby boarded the Hammerhead, and I oversaw the process of off loading of debris and HR's onto the pier. CDR LaBlanc arrived at the pier, and met with the medical examiner team, and observed the process of the off loading of debris.

2200 or thereabouts: The CGC Chinook was now due in at 2330. HSC Soby, HS1 Morris left Davisville to head back to the U.C.P. to get an update on Tuesday's events. I stayed behind to oversee the off loading of HR's and debris and to check on the condition of her crew.

Arrived back in quarters at 0200.

TUESDAY 2 NOV 99:

0700: Up and About.

0830: Headed back to the U.C.P. To get update on the CGC Reliance which had 260 lbs of debris and HR's onboard and was due in at 1130.

1000: Departed to the Davisville pier.

1030: Checked in with Gary Kleinman, and Dr. Gary Moore with the D-MORT team. Gym floor was still being removed, I was asked for my opinion on the set up of the R.I. Disaster team and location to the pier. (The R. I. Team is similar to a mash unit, it's a portable emergency room that can handle multiple casualties, Dr. Selim Suner the Commanding Officer, was also at the Otis Air show).

1130: CGC Reliance pulled in. HSC Soby boarded Reliance, and I found the HS onboard HS1 Dan Spears, I took a list of needed supplies, that he needed. I found HSC Klages on the pier, and gave him the list of materials HS1 Spears needed for the ship. I asked CDR LaBlanc if he wanted to see where the D-MORT Team was set up, I felt he needed to see the process and meet the commander.

1330: CDR LaBlanc and myself met with Gary Moore, Director of Emergency Readiness and Operations, and Gary Kleinman. It was decided to have a representative at the U.C.P. to monitor the CG cutter status and off loading. (At the present, I was the one informing the D-MORT and M.E.'s teams when another ship was coming in and what to expect).

1500: HSC Soby and I discussed the need for 3 HS's at the Davisville pier, all disaster teams were now in place, and we were more or less just checking on crews when the CGC Rangle and CGC Juniper pulled in. He stated he could handle the rest. I requested to be released from the U.C.P. With acute signs of sleep deprivation starting to show, I was concerned of being in a car accident, as I was traveling back in forth from the Davisville pier in my own car. After assuring CDR La Blanc that the ships would be covered, I was released from the U.C.P.

2000: HSC Soby assisted with the off loading of the CGC Rangle. The problem with high winds made it dangerous on the pier, so the FBI was unable to help. He spent the rest of the evening working with the crews on board the cutter off loading remains and debris.