

# On the Morning of 9/11 at the Pentagon: Conflicting Accounts on the Activities of Brig. Gen. Montague Winfield

Between 8:30 and 10:30 AM

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Region: [USA](#)

Theme: [Terrorism](#)

*The task of the National Military Command Center (NMCC), explained The 9/11 Commission Report, was “to gather the relevant parties and establish the chain of command between the National Command Authority – the president and the secretary of defense – and those who need to carry out their orders.”<sup>1</sup> The person responsible for gathering these parties was the NMCC’s deputy director of operations (DDO). In September 2001, the DDO was Army Brigadier General (BG) Montague Winfield. However, other people trained for this role can serve as the acting deputy director of operations.<sup>2</sup>*

On the issue of who served as the DDO on the morning of 9/11 from 8:30 until some time after 10:00, there are two conflicting accounts. For almost two years after 9/11, it was generally assumed that the DDO’s duties were carried out by Winfield himself. But on July 21, 2003, the Pentagon provided a briefing for nine members of the 9/11 Commission staff, who were told: “On 9/11, the acting-Deputy Director for Operations (DDO) was Navy Captain Charles Joseph Leidig.”<sup>3</sup> Both accounts are supported by evidence.

This Point is, accordingly, divided into two parts: Official Account #1 and Official Account #2.

## Official Account #1

Brigadier General Montague Winfield carried out the tasks of the DDO on the morning of 9/11, as shown by several facts.

1. TV specials the week of the first anniversary of 9/11 portrayed Winfield as on duty in the NMCC.

- Winfield and the National Military Command Center were featured in a retrospective CNN program in which Pentagon correspondent Barbara Starr said: “Brigadier General Montague Winfield was in command of the military’s worldwide nerve center that morning.”
- After the attack on the Pentagon, Starr said: “Winfield and his staff never feel the impact. . . . Winfield is running a secure phone call with the White House, the FAA, and the North American Air Defense Command, NORAD.”<sup>4</sup>

- Winfield was treated the same way in a 2002 ABC special, in which he gave a dramatic account of the military's attempt to stop United Flight 93 (which, the 9/11 Commission claimed, crashed in Shanksville, PA).<sup>5</sup>

2. General Richard Myers, who on 9/11 was the acting chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, stated in his 2009 book: "Army Brig. Gen. Montague Winfield was the duty officer in charge of the center that morning . . . General Winfield was doing a good job of managing the information flow and keeping the chain of command plugged in."<sup>6</sup>

3. Winfield's biographical statement says: "Brigadier General Winfield served as the Deputy Director for Operations, J3, in the National Military Command Center. He was present as the General Officer in Charge during the terrorist attacks of 9/11."<sup>7</sup>

Accordingly, although the Pentagon had initially said through spokespersons, including Winfield himself, that Winfield was the DDO during the attacks, the Pentagon later said that this original story was not true.

#### The Rejection of Official Account #1 (Substituted for "The Best Evidence")

In spite of what the public had been previously led to believe, nine 9/11 Commission staff members – as explained in the *Introduction*, above – were told by the Pentagon on July 21, 2003, that a different officer, Captain Charles Joseph Leidig, was serving as the DDO during the attacks.<sup>8</sup>

On April 29, 2004, Leidig was interviewed by five members of the 9/11 Commission staff. According to the staff-written preamble to the taped interview's transcript, Winfield was in "a USAF-convened session for general officers who rated Air Force Officers," and "[s]uch meetings are not disturbed unless the reason is significant."<sup>9</sup>

In May 2004, 9/11 Commission staff members held two interviews with Commander Patrick Gardner, who referred to Leidig as the Acting DDO on 9/11.<sup>10</sup>

#### Official Account #2

According to the Pentagon's briefing of nine members of the 9/11 staff on July 21, 2003:

- "[T]he acting-Deputy Director for Operations (DDO) was Navy Captain Charles Joseph Leidig, a trained back-up filling in for the Operations Team 2 leader, Army BG Winfield, who was at an unrelated, closed-door personnel meeting convened by the Air Force to discuss the rating of Air Force officers."
- "Captain Leidig was the primary DDO during the initial phase of the NMCC's reaction to events as they unfolded; BG Winfield transitioned into the position upon his return to the NMCC."<sup>11</sup>

Additional information was provided on April 29, 2004, when Miles Kara and four other members of the 9/11 Commission staff held an interview with Leidig.<sup>12</sup>

- The preamble, prepared by Kara, indicated: “On 9/11 Captain Leidig was the action Deputy Director for Operations (DDO). . . . He was sitting in place of the Operations Team 2 DDO, then Brigadier General Montague Winfield, USA, who was attending a meeting elsewhere in JCS spaces. The meeting was a USAF-convened session for general officers who rated Air Force officers. Such meetings are generally not disturbed unless the reason is significant.”<sup>13</sup>
- Leidig provided information about himself: “He had been on the Joint Staff since mid-July and qualified to be a DDO about a month previous to 9/11. He was qualified to substitute for any of the DDO’s who led the five Command Center watch teams.”<sup>14</sup>
- About replacing Winfield, Leidig stated: “General Winfield asked him the afternoon before if he would sit in as DDO for Operations Center Team 2. By agreement, he came in at 0830, received the intelligence . . . , and assumed the duty of Deputy Director of Operations. The Assistant DDO was Commander Pat Gardner, USN. He couldn’t recall the names of the other Operations Team 2 personnel on watch that day.”<sup>15</sup>
- After describing the sequence of events that occurred while he was the acting DDO, Leidig said that General Myers, at some point, “realized the coordinator was not a General as the position called for” and his “guidance was to get General Winfield briefed up and in the chair.” Finally, “General Winfield took over at some point in relation to the report of the Pennsylvania crash.”<sup>16</sup>

In the two interviews with Commander Patrick Gardner held by 9/11 Commission staff members in May 2004, Gardner confirmed Leidig’s statement in his April 29 interview that Gardner served as the Assistant DDO while he (Leidig) was the Acting DDO on 9/11.<sup>17</sup>

At June 17, 2004, there was a 9/11 Commission hearing, at which the public was first informed of Leidig’s role as DDO on 9/11. After Chairman Thomas Kean introduced him,<sup>18</sup> Leidig provided to the Commission a brief statement, in which he said:

- “Approximately two months prior to 11 September 2001, I assumed duties as the Deputy for Command Center Operations. . . . I qualified in August 2001 to stand watch as the Deputy Director for Operations in the NMCC.”
- “On 10 September 2001, Brigadier General Winfield, U. S. Army, asked that I stand a portion of his duty as Deputy Director for Operations, NMCC, on the following day. I agreed and relieved Brigadier General Winfield at 0830 on 11 September 2001.”<sup>19</sup>

## The Best Evidence

The account of the replacement of Winfield by Leidig is problematic for a number of reasons:

1. It would have been peculiar if Winfield, after having asked Leidig to replace him on 9/11,<sup>20</sup> had presented himself, in CNN and ABC programs in 2002, as the DDO during the attacks.<sup>21</sup>
2. Leidig's substitution for Winfield was - according to what is presently known - never mentioned before 2003, when the 9/11 Commission was working towards its final report.
3. A motive for a creation of this account in 2003 could have been provided by a 9/11 Commission desire to remove an embarrassing story from the official account of 9/11:
  - In the 2002 ABC television program in which Winfield appeared, he said: "The decision was made to try to go intercept Flight 93."<sup>22</sup>
  - In 2004, the 9/11 Commission claimed that the military was not notified about United Flight 93's hijacking until after it had crashed.<sup>23</sup> Given this claim, having Winfield as still central to the official story would have been an embarrassment.
4. Leidig's responses to questions he was asked on April 29, 2004, suggest that he did not know various things that he should have known. Leidig said, for example, that aside from Commander Pat Gardner - who reportedly served as his assistant DDO - he "couldn't recall the names of the other Operations Team 2 personnel on watch that day."<sup>24</sup>
5. With regard to why Winfield was not serving as the DDO that morning, the best explanation the Pentagon could provide, evidently, was that Winfield was at a "personnel meeting convened by the Air Force to discuss the rating of Air Force officers,"<sup>25</sup> and that "[s]uch meetings are generally not disturbed unless the reason is significant."<sup>26</sup> But surely two attacks on the World Trade Center would have provided a "significant" reason to call Winfield back to the NMCC.
6. Winfield was interviewed by the 9/11 Commission, but the notes for this interview were withdrawn from public view.<sup>27</sup>
7. Although the endnotes for two paragraphs about the DDO in *The 9/11 Commission Report* cite only an interview with Leidig, thereby implying that he had been the DDO on 9/11 (whereas the *Report* never implies that Winfield was the DDO), the *Report* did not explicitly identify Leidig as the DDO, instead referring to the DDO simply as "a military officer."<sup>28</sup>
8. Although the Pentagon said in 2003 and 2004 that Winfield had been replaced by Leidig, General Myers in his 2009 book, as reported above, stated that Winfield was "the duty officer in charge."

## Conclusion

The Pentagon has not provided a credible account of the behavior of Winfield during the attacks. Although initially there was reason to assume - as did the ABC and CNN programs in 2002 - that the DDO's role was performed by Winfield, the Pentagon later stated that this assumption was not true, by saying that the role of the DDO was taken over by Leidig. The

serious problems with this second account, however, suggest that the Pentagon and the 9/11 Commission have not reported the truth about the work of the DDO, and about Winfield's behavior, during the attacks.

If so, was this to minimize Winfield's role because, after the Pentagon and the 9/11 Commission declared in 2004 that the military did not know about UA Flight 93's hijacking until after it had crashed, Winfield had become a liability — due to his 2002 ABC statement that the military had decided “to try to go intercept flight 93”?

An investigation is needed to answer this question.

Notes:

1. [\*The 9/11 Commission Report: Final Report of the National Commission on Terrorist Attacks Upon the United States\*](#) (New York: W. W. Norton, 2004), 37.
2. For example, Air Force Col. Susan Kuehl, “the self-described ‘mayor of NMCC,’” is “a trained DDO and supervises the operation of the NMCC.” See [“Orientation and Tour of the National Military Command Center \(NMCC\): Secret Memorandum for the Record,”](#) July 21, 2003.
3. [“Orientation and Tour of the National Military Command Center \(NMCC\).”](#) One of those nine members was the Commission's executive director, Philip Zelikow.
4. [“‘The Pentagon Goes to War’: National Military Command Center,”](#) CNN American Morning with Paula Zahn, September 4, 2002.
5. [“9/11: Interviews by Peter Jennings,”](#) ABC News, September 11, 2002.
6. Richard B. Myers, *Eyes on the Horizon: Serving on the Front Lines of National Security* (New York: Threshold Editions, 2009), 152.
7. [“Brigadier General W. Montague ‘Que’ Winfield, Commander, JPAC”](#) (Joint POW/MIA Accounting Command).
8. [“Orientation and Tour of the National Military Command Center \(NMCC\).”](#)
9. [“Taped Interview of Captain Charles Joseph Leidig: Commission Sensitive Memorandum for the Record,”](#) April 29, 2004. The members of the staff were Miles Kara, Dana Hyde, Kevin Shaeffer, John Azzarello, and John Farmer. The interview was held in Joint Chiefs of Staff offices, with Col. Kuehl and a JCS legal officer present.
10. [“DH B2 Cmdr Gardner DOD Fdr, Entire Contents, Handwritten Interview Notes, May 5, 2004,”](#) NOIWON; [“DH B2 Cmdr Gardner DOD Fdr, Entire Contents, Handwritten Interview Notes, May 12, 2004,”](#) NOIWON.
11. [“Orientation and Tour of the National Military Command Center \(NMCC\).”](#)
12. [“Taped Interview of Captain Charles Joseph Leidig.”](#)
13. [Ibid.](#)
14. [Ibid.](#)

15. [Ibid.](#)
16. [Ibid.](#)
17. ["DH B2 Cmdr Gardner DOD Fdr, Entire Contents, Handwritten Interview Notes, May 5, 2004,"](#) NOIWON; ["DH B2 Cmdr Gardner DOD Fdr, Entire Contents, Handwritten Interview Notes, May 12, 2004,"](#) NOIWON.
18. Kean described Leidig as having "served as deputy director of operations in the National Military Command Center on 9/11," in the [9/11 Commission Hearing](#) of June 17, 2004.
19. ["Statement of Capt. Charles J. Leidig, Jr., before the National Commission on Terrorist Attacks upon the United States,"](#) June 17, 2004.
20. ["Taped Interview of Captain Charles Joseph Leidig."](#)
21. ["'The Pentagon Goes to War': National Military Command Center"](#) (CNN); "9/11: Interviews by Peter Jennings" (ABC).
22. Winfield continued: "We started receiving reports from the fighters that were heading to, to intercept. The FAA kept us informed with their time estimates as the aircraft got closer and closer. . . . And at some point, the closure time came and went, and nothing had happened. So you can imagine everything was very tense in the NMCC."
23. [The 9/11 Commission Report](#), 30, 38.
24. ["Taped Interview of Captain Charles Joseph Leidig," p. 1.](#) Four more examples: (1) "He could not say whether it was he or Gardner who had made notification calls to the offices of the Secretary of Defense and the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs." (2) "He did not recall if there has been a call to the White House." (3) "He . . . did not recall who was notified that the ATCC [air threat conference call] was convened." (4) "He did not recall phone calls to NORAD prior to the advent of the SIEC. At this point Staff turned to the transcript of the Air Threat Conference Call (ATCC) and recalled for him his update."
25. ["Orientation and Tour of the National Military Command Center."](#)
26. ["Taped Interview of Captain Charles Joseph Leidig."](#)
27. ["Interview with General Winfield"](#). The handwritten notes for this interview were withdrawn from the publicly available file, with a handwritten note: "national security withdrawn."
28. [The 9/11 Commission Report](#), 463 n. 190.

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