

around the White House complex. The officials who issued these orders did not know that there were additional hijacked aircraft, or that one such aircraft was en route to Washington. These measures were precautionary steps taken because of the strikes in New York.¹⁸⁷

The FAA and White House Teleconferences. The FAA, the White House, and the Defense Department each initiated a multiagency teleconference before 9:30. Because none of these teleconferences—at least before 10:00—included the right officials from both the FAA and Defense Department, none succeeded in meaningfully coordinating the military and FAA response to the hijackings.

At about 9:20, security personnel at FAA headquarters set up a hijacking teleconference with several agencies, including the Defense Department. The NMCC officer who participated told us that the call was monitored only periodically because the information was sporadic, it was of little value, and there were other important tasks. The FAA manager of the teleconference also remembered that the military participated only briefly before the Pentagon was hit. Both individuals agreed that the teleconference played no role in coordinating a response to the attacks of 9/11. Acting Deputy Administrator Belger was frustrated to learn later in the morning that the military had not been on the call.¹⁸⁸

At the White House, the video teleconference was conducted from the Situation Room by Richard Clarke, a special assistant to the president long involved in counterterrorism. Logs indicate that it began at 9:25 and included the CIA; the FBI; the departments of State, Justice, and Defense; the FAA; and the White House shelter. The FAA and CIA joined at 9:40. The first topic addressed in the White House video teleconference—at about 9:40—was the physical security of the President, the White House, and federal agencies. Immediately thereafter it was reported that a plane had hit the Pentagon. We found no evidence that video teleconference participants had any prior information that American 77 had been hijacked and was heading directly toward Washington. Indeed, it is not clear to us that the video teleconference was fully under way before 9:37, when the Pentagon was struck.¹⁸⁹

Garvey, Belger, and other senior officials from FAA headquarters participated in this video teleconference at various times. We do not know who from Defense participated, but we know that in the first hour none of the personnel involved in managing the crisis did. And none of the information conveyed in the White House video teleconference, at least in the first hour, was being passed to the NMCC. As one witness recalled, “[It] was almost like there were parallel decisionmaking processes going on; one was a voice conference orchestrated by the NMCC . . . and then there was the [White House video teleconference]. . . . [I]n my mind they were competing venues for command and control and decisionmaking.”¹⁹⁰

At 10:03, the conference received reports of more missing aircraft, “2 pos-