

FLIGHT 93

INT. 4x4. KANDAHAR. DAY

A traveling POV - dusty streets, shanty houses, open sewers. Groups of men standing, women carrying heavy loads, children scratching in shadows. We could be anywhere – Africa, the Middle East, South America.

In fact we're in Kandahar, Afghanistan.

EXT. SLUMS. KANDAHAR. DAY

A convoy of vehicles – a red Toyota leading a black 4x4 with tinted windows and a white station wagon behind – sweeping through the slums towards their destination. Scarcely anyone looks up as they pass by.

EXT. AL MATAR COMPLEX. DAY

The convoy approaches a compound on the outskirts of town. White walls, barbed wire, sentry towers. Obvious signs of armed security outside. This is the Al Matar complex, Osama Bin Laden's principal base of operations in Afghanistan.

Bring up the date: April 17th 1999

We sweep through into the courtyard. The vehicles slow to a halt. Out steps a man in a faded canvas suit carrying a briefcase. His name is Khaled Sheikh Mohammed. He has been an active international terrorist for almost half of his 38 years.

From a distance we watch as he goes inside. Through windows we see him walk down a hallway. He waits momentarily outside a door. It opens. As he goes in we catch a glimpse – no more – of a tall imposing figure in a white shirt and combat tunic.

The door closes and we cut to:

0530

EXT. NEW YORK. DAWN

Dawn breaking over the New York skyline.

And we bring up the date: September 11th 2001.

0530

EXT. NEWARK AIRPORT

In the half-light we make out rows and rows of gleaming humming silver birds.

Newark is gearing up for a busy September day.

In the distance we see Newark tower.

INT. NEWARK TOWER. CONTINUOUS

Radio chatter. Controllers huddle over screens, checking in with other centers. Things are running smoothly at Newark Airport Tower.

One small cog in the vast US air traffic system.

EXT. APPROACH ROAD. HERNDON CENTER

Ben Sliney pulls in to his parking space at the FAA's National Air Traffic Command Center.

He turns off the engine and pauses looking out at the building in front.

As newly appointed FAA National Operations Manager, today he will be in charge of the entire US air traffic system.

He gathers his things and heads for the entrance.

INT. HERNDON CENTER FOYER

Sliney signs in. Jokes with a receptionist about his promotion as he is handed a new security pass. Gets a coffee.

He nods at familiar faces along the corridors, taking the banter as he goes.

He reaches the door to the Operations Center and goes in.

INT. OPERATIONS CENTER. HERNDON

It's a big, open room – 100 feet wide, 50 feet deep, very high ceilings. There are 7 tiers of console clusters, with 7 large projection screens (about 10'x12') covering the long, lower wall.

On the main shifts, there are around 50 people present – 30 ATC specialists and supervisors arrayed in consoles, plus 20 other airline and military liaison and communications staff divided by region and focus (East, West, Severe Weather etc)

As Sliney walks the line of controllers he gets his first briefing of the day from the midnight supervisor at the watch desk, located on the floor bottom-right and decked out with weather monitors, a "status board" showing ground delays, ground stops, etc. The supervisor is off shift, and eager to go. He keeps it short and sweet.

SUPERVISOR

A little weather out west. Nothing to worry about. No ground stops. Delays minimal.

SLINEY

Anything I should know about?

SUPERVISOR

The President is travelling today. He's in Florida. We've got restrictions in place until 10:30 a.m, and that's it.

SLINEY

And that's it?

SUPERVISOR

That's it. It's all yours Ben.

The midnight supervisor exits, leaving Sliney looking up at the massive screen high on the wall. Watches the electronic dots building across North America in perfect synchronicity. Soon there will be almost 5000 planes aloft.

"Clockwork" Sliney thinks to himself. A thing of beauty.

0530

INT. DAYS INN. NEWARK AIRPORT

In a hotel room near to the airport two men are praying.

Bent prostrate on the floor. Abject. Devotional. These are Saeed al Ghamdi and Ahmed al Nami.

They recite passages from the Koran about forgiveness and martyrdom - the two Suras, Al Tawba 'Repentance' and Al Anfa 'The spoils of war.'

O Allah! If this is indeed
The Truth from Thee,
Rain down on us a shower of stones from the sky,
Or send us a grievous Penalty

The modern world reduced to medieval simplicities.

INT. ANOTHER HOTEL. NEWARK AIRPORT

An early morning alarm wakes United Airlines pilot Jason Dahl. He showers and puts on his uniform half watching the news and weather.

Dahl has altered his schedule so that he can see his mother in San Jose, California and be back at the weekend to celebrate his wedding anniversary.

Today he will fly United Airlines Flight 93.

0545

INT. DAYS INN. NEWARK AIRPORT

In another room two more young men are concluding their morning prayers. These are Ahmad al Haznawi and Ziad Jarrah, leader of the Flight 93 operation.

They begin to shave all excess hair and wash their bodies. They dry and perfume. They dress, following an intense and particular ritual, the details of which were later discovered in Mohammed Atta's luggage.

Vow to accept death, renew admonition, shave the extra hair on the body, perfume yourself, and ritually wash yourself.

Completely forget something called 'this life'. The time for play is over and the serious time is upon us.

Let your breast be filled with gladness, for there is nothing between you and your wedding but mere seconds.

INT. MARRIOTT. NEWARK AIRPORT

Flight attendant Sandra Bradshaw shuts off the showerhead and grabs for a towel in the small en suite bathroom of her shared hotel room.

Other stewardesses are asleep. Some on the bed, some on the floor. Uniforms hang throughout, draped on chairs and curtain rails.

Bradshaw blow-dries her hair and dresses in the mirror.

As she grabs her trolley case from the corner a colleague stirs.

STEWARDESS

Sandy? You gone already?

BRADSHAW

Yeah - I'm on 93 to San Fran.

Bradshaw creeps out of the room and closes the door.

INT. THE DAYS INN. NEWARK AIRPORT

Haznawi and Jarrah begin to prepare their luggage.

Mundane items at first - clothes, shoes, papers etc.

Then more curious items, children's clay, red tape, a roll of wire, a battery, a canister of pepper spray, a red bandanna and lastly...

A 3.5-inch ceramic knife.

Haznawi doesn't pack this, but tucks it into his belt. No need to conceal what is perfectly legal after all.

They leave the room.

0600

INT. TAXI. TOWARDS NEWARK AIRPORT.

A businessman is on the move – leaving a voice mail message for

his boss. Hey, good news there's room on an earlier flight. I'll make the meeting.

He calls the car company.

BURNETT

Yeah reference 2020. Thomas Burnett. I'm taking the earlier flight. United 93. I'll need a car to meet me in San Francisco.

Now he calls his secretary to leave word about his change of itinerary.

BURNETT

Hi, it's me. Change of plan. I'm in at ten so check the car. I'm going straight to the eleven o'clock.

He's focussed, accurate, decisive – parsing hours into minutes. minutes into seconds. Making his time count. No wonder Thomas Burnett is one of America's leading businessmen under 40.

Today he too will fly Flight 93.

0645

EXT./INT. DAYS INN. NEWARK AIRPORT

Al Ghamdi and Al Nami leave their rooms.

Down the monotonous corridors and out into the lobby.

INT. TAXI TOWARDS NEWARK AIRPORT

Jason Dahl makes his way to the airport.

INT. SHUTTLEBUS.

Sandra Bradshaw is on the move too. Hurriedly putting on lipstick as the bus pulls into the approach road to the airport.

EXT. DAYS INN. NEWARK AIRPORT

Jarrah collects his car from the lot. Pulls the car round to reception.

See Haznawi waiting for the others.

As we see Jarrah's face clearly for the first time, we wonder if there is any moment of doubt or hesitation, pity or compassion.

Suddenly he flips open his cell phone and dials a number. As it answers he speaks six words in Arabic quickly.

JARRAH

I love you. I love you.

He rings off.

Haznawi, Al Ghamdi and Al Nami walk out to meet Jarrah.

The car pulls away.

0700

INT /EXT. TAXI. NEWARK AIRPORT

Flight 93 pilot Jason Dahl pulls up outside the airport and enters the Terminal building.

INT. TERMINAL BUILDING. NEWARK AIRPORT

Inside the Terminal Building "Good morning America" flickers on airport televisions throughout the hall.

Dahl descends a flight of stairs into the lower level.

INT. UNITED AIRLINES OPERATIONS CENTRE

Jason Dahl enters the United Airlines' Operations Center through an unlocked door.

He walks down the hall to a hatch. Inside a flight office rep hands him paperwork. Dahl takes it, checks his "NOTAMs" (Notice to Airmen) in his mailbox, which tell pilots of any important changes or irregularities.

Then meets Leroy Homer, his First Officer for the day. They have never flown together before.

They sit with other pilot teams at a long, slanted desktop in the cramped pilots area, going over the paper work. Yesterday's thunderstorms have blown out. But Dahl is concerned about fuel

and calls up the dispatcher. It's the daily haggling of every pilot's life. The airlines give the minimum. The pilots always want more.

DAHL

Hey, this is Jason Dahl flying Flight 93 to San Fran. I'm a little concerned about the fuel. I'd like to add a couple thousand because there's lo viz in San Fran.

After a bit of to and fro Dahl gets the fuel he needs. He signs his paperwork and gives a carbon copy to the flight office rep on the other side of the desk. The rep enters the changes into the computer.

Dahl and Homer head out to the airplane.

INT. GATE 17

Dahl and Homer walk past the passenger waiting area and down the jetway to the plane.

INT. FLIGHT 93

Dahl settles in as Homer dumps his bag and walks back onto the jetway, out the side door and down some steps.

EXT. GATE 17. TARMAC

We follow Homer out into the open air and there it is, for the first time -a magnificent Boeing 757-200.. A thing of power and delicacy. A beautiful man-made silver bird.

This is Flight 93.

INT. COCKPIT FLIGHT 93

Dahl settles into his seat and begins his pre-flight checklist, moving across the aircraft's bewildering array of switches, gauges and computers.

It's wondrous complexity.

EXT. FLIGHT 93

Homer waves to a maintenance worker as he gets out of a fuel truck.

Watches as he connects a fuel pipe to the wing.

As Homer begins his inspection, the fuel workers open the hydrant's valve with a blast of compressed air.

Gauges on the wing leap to life as the fuel rushes into the planes tanks at 100 psi .

INT. FUEL PIPE VFX

We follow the Kerosene as it gushes, through a filtration system and up the pipes into the plane, filling its vast tanks, with the precious liquid.

Flight 93 is a greedy, greedy bird.

EXT. NEWARK TERMINAL.

The four hijackers park in the Terminal car park and walk towards the Terminal Building. They pass other passengers arriving to board United Airlines 93.

Passenger Ed Felt walks towards the terminal, a briefcase in hand, a newspaper under his arm.

Passenger Georgine Corrigan says goodbye to her brother. She organizes her three suitcases with a skycap, a carry-on full of her jewelry hanging from the crook of her arm.

Passenger Mark Rothenberg crushes out one last cigarette as he exits his taxi and goes towards the Terminal doors.

INT. UNITED AIRLINES DOMICILE

We follow Sandra Bradshaw as she moves through the terminal building and enters the domicile through an unmarked door in the airport's innards. She punches in a security code, and enters United's flight-attendant operations center.

At the counter she scribbles her initials by her name on what United calls the FLT LOF; the line of flight. She is now officially on duty. She pours a coffee and sits down at the meeting table.

Senior Flight Attendant Deborah Welsh comes over and greets Bradshaw and two other attendants –CeeCee Lyles and Lorraine Bay - as they gather at a table.

Wanda Green is the last to arrive as always.

GREEN

Sorry guys – traffic.

She hangs up her coat and finds a place at the table.

The group is complete.

They run through the flight. First they allocate roles. Welsh is the purser - the No1. She will be working first class, Green and Bay up front in coach, Lyles and Bradshaw at the back of the plane.

Given Bradshaw's seniority she would usually work up front, but she doesn't mind. Today she's just happy to be flying and part of a team.

Before leaving for the gate, they check over the passenger manifest. The flight will be less than half full.

0700

EXT/INT. NEWARK TERMINAL BUILDING.

The four hijackers enter the Terminal building.

Al Nami and Al Ghamdi first. Then Haznawi. Jarrah hangs back waiting.

As they move through the concourse they filter out the banal chatter that surrounds them.

Briefcases, cell phones, lovers farewells - this is not their world. It is the world of the *Kufr* - the unbeliever.

Al Nami passes Linda Gronlund, an Environmental Compliance Manager, as she hauls her luggage down the walkway with boyfriend, Joseph DeLuca.

Al Ghamdi passes student Nicole Miller who is saying goodbye to

her friend Ryan Brown after spending some time together in New York.

Haznawi looks back as Donald Greene, a 52 year-old vice president of the Safe Flight Instrument Corporation passes him.

Still Jarrah is watching.

INT. LIMO PULLING UP TO TERMINAL BUILDING

Now Thomas Burnett is arriving too.

EXT. CONCOURSE TERMINAL BUILDING

Burnett still on the phone, tips the driver and steps out towards the concourse, through the jam of traffic and exhaust fumes. Newark is hotting up. It's rush hour.

He walks into the terminal.

EXT. TARMAC. GATE 17

As the fuel flows, Homer continues to inspect the plane.

The tail fin, the wings tips, the huge turbo fan Pratt & Whitney engines.

The maintenance worker, checks the dials and shuts off the fuel hose. Fueling is complete.

The maintenance worker prints out a receipt for the fuel.

0715

INT. AIRCRAFT JETWAY/CABIN. FLIGHT 93.

Sandra Bradshaw and the other stewardesses now head down the jetway into the cabin.

When she enters, she goes to the back of the plane to carry out her safety checks.

She and CeeCee Lyles work quickly and efficiently. They are friends and have flown together before.

They look over their jump seats to make sure life vests and flashlights are in place, then examine the oxygen bottles and pressure gauges.

Deborah Welsh checks the video system and makes sure the cockpit key is hidden in its secret place in the galley. She then goes into the cabin to introduce herself to the captain.

INT COCKPIT. FLIGHT 93

Dahl greets Welsh and gives her the headlines. There may be a little chop over the Rockies; flight time is five hours forty. He'd like to eat about an hour in.

They establish the secret knock that will allow her to gain access to the cabin.

"Three and one." He tells her.

As Welsh leaves the cabin, the maintenance worker enters and asks Dahl to sign for the fuel.

Dahl signs for 48,700 pounds of Kerosene.

It's getting busy.

0715

EXT. AIRCRAFT FLIGHT 93

Meanwhile, co-pilot Leroy Homer is completing his inspection of the outside of the plane.

He checks tire pressure, looks inside the engines, radios Dahl and asks him to turn on the external lights to check they're working.

Up close, at ground level we get a sense of the scale of this awesome machine.

Checks complete Homer bounds up the jetway to join Dahl in the cockpit.

0715
(0705)

INT.TERMINAL BUILDING.NEWARK AIRPORT

Al Ghamdi and Al Nami check in at a United Airlines desk.

Al Nami puts two bags onto the conveyor belt.

AGENT

You traveling alone today, sir?

Al Nami nods. His English is almost non-existent.

AGENT

Did you pack these bags yourself?

Another nod.

AGENT

Did anyone give you anything to take on the airplane?

A shake of the head.

We begin to have an unnerving sense of their utter disengagement from the polite rituals that attend our 21st century lives.

Al Ghamdi steps up now, glancing across to Haznawi who has taken up position at a desk further down.

Haznawi checks one bag.

The Computer Assisted Passenger Pre-screening System selects him through risk algorithm calculation. The ticket agent puts a special tag on his checked luggage, then processes his check in.

Haznawi's knife is visible in his belt, hilt up and clear to see.

Jarrah is watching on from the seated area near the entrance.

Sees Al Nami and Al Ghamdi move away from check-in.

Then Haznawi soon after.

As he sees his younger accomplices disappear down the escalators towards security, Jarrah steps up to United's first class desk and checks in.

They are over the first hurdle.

INT. SECURITY AREA

We follow Jarrah as he travels towards security, past fellow

passengers, Louis Nacke and Japanese student Toshiya Kuge.

Again Jarrah hangs back, watching as al Ghamdi and al Nami , arrive at the security checkpoint, run by United Airlines and operated under contract by Argenbright Security.

They pass through without event.

Haznawi is a little further back. He approaches the checkpoint, laying his hand luggage on the conveyor belt.

INT .WALKWAY

Al Nami and Al Ghamdi walk towards Gate 17 moving through lines of commuters.

INT. SECURITY AREA

Haznawi empties his loose change into a small plastic bowl before passing into the metal detector.

Still his knife is visible, hilt up. No one confiscates the weapon.

The security screener looks at his bag as it crosses through the x-ray.

We pick out the roll of wire, the battery, a pepper-spray canister, duct tape.

All innocuous items.

In the background, Jarrah watches on.

Haznawi waits.

INT. GATE 17

Al Nami and Al Ghamdi arrive at the gate now.

They look around at their fellow travellers at Gate 17.

The two hijackers sit down side by side in between Christian Adams and Deora Bodley.

Nearby, Jeremy Glick sets down his bag down and takes a seat opposite Alan Beaven.

INT. SECURITY AREA

Haznawi collects his loose change from the bowl, and retrieves his bag.

He is through.

Todd Beamer, who is traveling to the West Coast for a business meeting, steps up to the metal detector.

Behind him Colleen Fraser places her bag on the conveyor belt.

With Haznawi through Jarrah proceeds towards the checkpoint joining another line between Donald and Jean Peterson, and Christine Snyder.

INT. WALKWAY ENTRANCE

Haznawi hovers, watching to see if Jarrah clears security.

Jane Folger, Patricia Cushing and John Talignani, pass him by, oblivious to the deadly choreography that is playing out before them.

Jarrah clears too - without a flicker of anxiety.

One glance from Jarrah and Haznawi is on the move.

They are through.

INT. WALKWAY

Haznawi and Jarrah -still separate- make their way down the long wide central corridor past wall advertisements with banal tag lines.

Through their eyes we see our world in a very different light- frivolous, sexualized, and superficial.

Above all unsuspecting.

INT. CAR. TRAVELLING.

Mark Bingham is running late. A six foot four former rugby champion at the University of California at Berkeley, Bingham runs a public relations firm in San Francisco with a branch in New York.

Its touch and go as to whether he will make it onto his flight this morning.

He spies the twin towers of the World Trade Center from the passenger seat of his friend Mark Hall's Chevy Beretta, as they speed towards Newark Airport.

MARK BINGHAM

Hey, look-New York.

0740

INT GATE 17

The lounge is filling. Kristin White Gould arrives, then Lauren Grandcolas, and Richard Guadagno.

The last of the hijackers arrive too, assimilating themselves effortlessly within the humdrum commuter scene.

Haznawi, hovers for a while then sits a couple of seats away from Mark Rothenberg.

Jarrah too, walks to the window passing Waleska Martinez and Marion Britton.

He sits down and, surveys the gathering crowd.

Nervous flyers gather their thoughts. Experienced commuter travelers work their palm pilots.

And still the passengers arrive - Andrew Garcia, William Cashman, Honor Elizabeth Wainio.

There are last minute phone calls, both business and personal.

Nicole Miller makes a call to Ryan Brown - a brief farewell.

Mickey Rothenberg calls a business associate with last minute details about their meeting.

Linda Gronlund chats with her sister. Linda and her boyfriend Joseph Deluca are on heading for the west coast.

Thomas Burnett arrives too. As a first class passenger he checks in at the gate, and then looks for a seat.

He strolls past Hilda Marcin, Patrick 'Joe' Driscoll and Jeremy Glick who is trying to call home.

GLICK

Tell her I love her and I'll call when I get to San Francisco.

Burnett takes a seat next to Jarrah. Makes a call, oblivious to the intense young man sitting next to him, whose thoughts are far away.

Know the plane well from every angle. Anticipate the reaction or the resistance of the enemy.

You must make your knife sharp and you must not discomfort your animal during the slaughter.

Jarrah looks at his watch and flips open his cell. He gets up and moves to a quiet corner. Dials a number. A moments hesitation.

He speaks quickly in Arabic.

JARRAH

We are ready.

Just then ground staff at gate 17 make the first call for Flight 93.

0741

INT. FLIGHT 93

In the cockpit pilot Jason Dahl powers up the plane's ground electrical system.

The passengers begin to board the plane.

Flight attendants Lorraine Bay and Wanda Green stand at the doorway, ushering the ten passengers in first class down the aisle to their left and the twenty-seven in coach down to their right, towards Sandra Bradshaw.

In total there are 44 people, 37 passengers, 2 pilots, 5 flight attendants, in amongst them - 4 hijackers.

The hijackers sit in first class, which consists of six rows each with three seats. Jarrah is in seat 1B, closest to the cockpit; al Nami is in 3C; al Ghamdi in 3D and al Haznawi in 6B.

Later the FBI would discover the 9/11 operation's leader Mohammad Atta's instruction manual in a car left at Boston Airport.

In the plane as soon as you get on, you should pray to God...

As soon as you board the aeroplane and have taken your seat, remember that which you were told earlier and devote yourself to remember God.

God says that when you are surrounded by several non-believers, you must sit quietly and remember that God will make victory possible.

Senior stewardess Deborah Welsh interrupts their prayers. Offers them newspapers and refreshments. The hijackers again decline monosyllabically.

Now we understand. Their disengagement is total. Lethal.

0750

EXT. CONCOURSE. NEWARK AIRPORT

Hall's Chevy Beretta pulls up at the United terminal. Bingham gives him a hug and rushes inside. He's late for boarding.

INT. WALKWAY. NEWARK AIRPORT

Bingham sprints up the central corridor to Gate 17.

INT. GATE 17. NEWARK AIRPORT

He checks in, and dashes down the jetway.

INT. CABIN. FLIGHT 93

He steps up just as the door is about to be closed. He is the last person to board the plane takes seat 4D in first class, just behind Al Ghamdi and across the aisle from Thomas Burnett.

The cabin crew close the doors and pull the locking mechanism across.

INT. DOOR LOCKING MECHANISM VFX

Inside the locking mechanism the bolt engages and locks.

Those aboard Flight 93 are sealed in.

Safe from the dangers of a turbulent world.

INT.HERNDON COMMAND CENTER

Back at the National Air Traffic Command Center, Controller Ben Sliney makes his way across the floor, back to his desk.

He's got the regular once every two hour tele-conference with all Centers, TRACONS, major airlines, etc., called the "spit" (for Special Planning Telcon).

When he gets on the line there's a lot of banter for the new guy on the bridge. It's a buddy world air traffic control, bullish but trusting.

COLLEAGUE

See the thing is Ben, perfection cannot be improved.

SLINEY

You watch me.

0759

EXT. BOSTON LOGAN AIRPORT TOWER

Six hundred miles to the north, a huge gas laden American Airlines 767 bound for Los Angeles, taxis then pauses at the foot of a runway.

TOWER

American 11, this is Boston Logan Tower, you are cleared for take off.

AMERICAN 11

Roger that.

0800

EXT. BOSTON LOGAN AIRPORT

American 11 thunders down the runway and into the air.

0801

INT. BOSTON CENTER

An extreme close up of American 11's transponder signal as it refreshes across the radar screen.

Radio traffic fades in and out describing it's route as it passes from Logan Tower.

To Terminal Approach.

And eventually out into Boston Center airspace.

We pull out to see a Boston Center Controller Pete Zalewski seated in front of a broad, square-screened radar scope in one of Boston Center's five U-shaped radar areas.

ZALEWSKI

American 11 you are with Boston Center on channel 3.

AMERICAN 11

Roger. Boston Center. American 11.

Zalewski takes another routine flight on to his screen.

INT NEWARK TOWER

Inside Newark Tower, Controller Callahan listens to a call for push back from pilot Jason Dahl aboard UA93.

UNITED 93

This is United 93, gate 17. We're ready for push-back.

TOWER

United 93. You're clear to push.

EXT. TARMAC. GATE 17

A hard wired ground guy signals to the cockpit.

0801

INT COCKPIT FLIGHT 93

Jason Dahl and co pilot LeRoy Homer, prepare for push back.

CAPT

Okay. We're clear to push. Brakes set.

GROUND GUY

Release brakes.

CAPT

Breaks released. Clear to push.

The plane rolls backwards, comes to a halt.

GROUND GUY

Set brakes. Clear to start engines.

CAPT

Brakes set. Pressure normal. Clear to start, start number two.

GROUND GUY

Toe bar's disconnected. Can I disconnect the headset?

CAPT

Clear to disconnect the headset. We'll watch for your salute. Have a good day.

EXT. TARMAC GATE 17

The Ground guy gives the all clear with a brief salute. Dahl flashes the taxi lights to confirm.

INT. NEWARK TOWER

Callahan directs Flight 93 to the taxiway.

CAPT

Newark Ground, this is United 93, taxiway Romeo Alpha, ready for taxi.

TOWER

Roger, United 93. Taxi to runway Two-Two Right Bravo.

INT. CABIN FLIGHT 93

In the cabin Sandy Bradshaw and CeeCee Lyles begin the safety procedures.

WELSH

Ladies and Gentlemen on behalf of Captain Jason Dahl I would like to welcome you onboard this non-stop flight to San Francisco.

Some passengers - not many – watch.

WELSH

At this time as the doors have now been closed I would ask you to please put your tray tables up and your seats back in the upright position and switch off all cellular phones and other electrical devices.

Most passengers are reading. Newspapers. Magazines. The news is humdrum, domestic, unaware.

Tucked away on international pages we glimpse stories from a troubled world. War, struggle, poverty, hunger.

Some passengers talk. Some make clear in their body language to the person next to them that they don't wish to engage.

In first class Burnett is still on the phone. Relentlessly focused on the business of the day. He wraps up the call.

Across the way, Bingham calls Hall who is now driving home.

BINGHAM

Thanks for driving me. I made the plane. I'm in first class, drinking a glass of orange juice.

He turns off his phone also.

In seat 1B, Jarrah, sits deep in prayer, following Atta's instructions.

When the aeroplane moves, as soon as it starts to move slowly start praying the prayers of travelling Muslims, because you travel in order to meet God and to enjoy the journey.

Al Nami and Al Ghamdi in 3C and 3D, and Haznawi 6B are doing the same.

An intense silent commune.

INT. COCKPIT FLIGHT 93

In the cockpit Jason Dahl and Leroy Homer steer the plane out onto the taxiway.

DAHL

Give me flaps 5 when you're ready.

Homer begins the take-off check-list, re-checking flaps, weight and balance. United faxes them a final weight figure, which they check against what's entered into the computer.

TOWER

United 93, monitor tower on one-eighteen-three.

DAHL

One-eighteen-three, Roger.

The plane is now in the system.

0813

INT BOSTON ATC

Controller Pete Zalewski is still handling American 11 at his screen as it tracks out west. He's been working the morning shift since 7am.

As a gay man with a business degree, he's probably in the minority among controllers, but he loves the intensity and is pushing 25 years on the job. By all accounts, he's good at it. Today he will have to be.

BOSTON

American 11 turn twenty degrees right.

FLIGHT 11

Twenty right, American 11.

16 seconds later Zalewski instructs American 11 to climb to 35000 feet.

There's no response.

He repeats the command.

ZALEWSKI

American 11 – Boston Center, How do you hear...?

American 11 – Boston Center... American 11 - Boston Center..

Still no response.

Zalewski turns to the controller next to him – Greg Taccini, who has just handed American 11 off to Zalewski.

ZALEWSKI

Greg, can you check and see if you have American 11 back on your frequency? I'm not getting him.

TACINNI

American 11 – Boston Center...American 11 – Boston Center, how do you hear...?

Nothing.

Zalewski switches to emergency frequency to try to reach the pilot.

No reply.

That's odd, thinks Zalewski.

American 11 is now heading out of his air space, on to another controllers screen. He hands off the flight with a few strokes of the keyboard.

Zalewski radios across to that controller to tell him American 11 is not responding. But for some reason he can't quite let it go. It's playing on his mind. He switches his screen back to track American 11.

Just a precaution.

0814

EXT BOSTON LOGAN AIRPORT

Meanwhile, back at Boston Logan Airport, another fuel laden plane- United Airlines Flight 175 - a Boeing 767 bound for Los

Angeles - is given permission to take off.

TOWER V/O

This is Boston Logan Tower - United 175 you are cleared for takeoff.

Flight 175 roars down the runway and into the air.

INT. BOSTON ATC

Just like American 11 we track United 175's transponder signal in extreme close-up as it passes from Logan tower.

To Terminal Approach.

And finally into Boston Center airspace.

CONTROLLER V/O

United 175 you are with Boston Centre.

We pull out from the screen to find a controller accepting United 175.

As we move across to the next U area, we pass another controller asking an American flight nearby to try to contact American 11 on the company frequency.

CONTROLLER

American 25 - Boston Center. I need you to try and contact American 11 on company frequency. If you get him, let me know.

We move on again to yet another U area, picking up Zalewski as he continues his vigil on American 11.

It's still no show.

0818

INT COCKPIT FLIGHT 93

Flight 93 joins a queue of 10-15 planes awaiting take off.

TOWER

United 93, you're cleared on to taxiway Four Seven Bravo and hold. Takeoff runway two-two right.

CAPT

Roger. United 93. Hold taxiway Four Seven Bravo.

TOWER

We're expecting a 30 minute delay due to traffic.

CAPT

Thanks a lot guys. You have a nice day too.

INT CABIN FLIGHT 93

Pilot Jason Dahl's voice comes over the intercom.

DAHL

Morning folks. This is the captain. Looks like things are jammed up pretty good here at Newark this morning. We're anticipating about a twenty-minute delay. So sit back, relax. We'll let you know when we get an update from the tower and get you flying to San Francisco just as soon as we can.

It's not unusual. The skies above New York are the busiest in the world – especially at commuter hour.

In coach, Sandra Bradshaw charms the coach passengers.

In first class Burnett and Bingham, sitting across the aisle from one another, use news of the delay to break the ice. A brief interaction.

At the front Jarrah watches the line of aircraft snaking away into the distance. This is going to be a long wait.

His face says it all.

Why the delay? What does it mean?

0821

INT BOSTON ATC

Controller Pete Zalewski, is starting to get anxious now. Aircraft do occasionally fail to respond, but this has gone on too long.

Suddenly American 11's transponder reading disappears from his screen.

Zalewski quietly calls over his supervisor John Schippani, who gets up from his desk and walks over, leaning in from behind.

ZALEWSKI

I think something's wrong with American 11. The transponder signal's gone. I don't know what - it's either mechanical, electrical... but something's happened.

Schippani says he'll alert management.

We follow him as he crosses the floor back to his desk at the end of Area 'C'. He picks up the phone and begins to dial the watch desk.

Meanwhile, Zalewski switches to primary radar to track the missing aircraft.

Suddenly he hears a mysterious voice in his ear. It's heavily accented and not at all clear. Stay quiet? Returning to the airport?

Perhaps he didn't hear it right.

Then comes a second transmission. Chillingly clear.

INTERCOM TRANSMISSION

Nobody move, everything will be okay. If you try to make any moves, you'll endanger yourself and the airplane. Just stay quiet.

Zalewski jumps up and shouts for Schippani.

ZALEWSKI

John get over here immediately right now.

The other controllers in the 'U' room turn and look at him, surprised.

Schippani hurries over.

SCHIPPANI

Okay, calm down. What did they say? What did it sound like?

Zalewski tells him they've got a hijack. Sounded middle-eastern but he couldn't understand every word, just enough to know

there's an unauthorized person in the cockpit.

We move with Schippani now, quickly out of Area C, hanging a right as he hustles down the aisle – past the mouths of other radar areas, to the Watch Desk – a square-shaped operations command area with computers and a couple of scopes comprising banks on three sides and an L-shaped ops desk in the middle.

He relays the information to the Operations Manager that American 11 has been hijacked.

Meanwhile back in Area C Zalewski is focusing. He asks Taccini to take the rest of his planes so he can concentrate on American 11 which is currently up over Albany, New York.

There are a handful of people around Zalewski's scope by now, all watching the screen, discussing the problem.

Suddenly, American 11 makes a big, unexpected turn from Northwest-bound to Southbound.

ZALEWSKI

Whoa! Look at that.

Something is seriously fucking wrong.

0826

INT. FLIGHT 93

Flight 93 crawls towards the end of the taxiway. For regular travellers on board it's a routine hazard of rush hour commuter air travel. But for the hijackers, it's a disaster.

Jarrah looks at his watch, again. He can see the World Trade Centre away in the distance.

They should be in action by now.

0828

INT. HERNDON COMMAND CENTRE

At the National Command Centre, Ben Sliney is at his desk running down the agenda for the morning staff meeting, when the supervisor for the East desk, Tommy Paccione approaches.

TOMMY

Ben, we may have a potential hijack out of Boston.

SLINEY

You're kidding me?!?

TOMMY

American flight 11, Boston – LAX

SLINEY

Did they get a code?

TOMMY

I think they may have had a hit...Boston Center thinks they heard something in the background.

SLINEY

Where is he now?

TOMMY

About 50, 60 out of Boston.

SLINEY

I gotta go to the 8:30. Anything develops, come in and tell me about it.

The conversation is serious, but bemused.

Sliney thinks, Jesus, the last hijacking was 10-12 years ago.

INT CONFERENCE ROOM HERNDON

The core group of Herndon managers gather in a conference room overlooking the floor.

There are two or three women, maybe four men including John White, Herndon's seasoned facilities manager and Sliney's most trusted colleague.

Sliney tells them about the suspected hijacking and they begin the routine morning call to FAA HQ with the news.

Almost immediately, Paccione comes in and whispers in Sliney's ear:

PACCIONE

Ben, we got more information from Boston Center. They believe a stewardess may have been stabbed on that flight.

Slaney stands up, calm but serious -

SLANEY

Excuse me. We have some information developing on the hijacking.

He walks out of the meeting with Paccione in his wake, grabs a legal pad to keep notes and heads back into the operations room.

Everyone's looking at Slaney as he walks in. Some follow him to the East desk, a cluster of four consoles down at the front. Others watch from their positions. Everyone is aware there is a potential hijacking. Word of the stabbing has spread like wildfire.

Tommy asks his Boston specialists for an update while Slaney listens. They're on the phone to Boston Centre, but having a hard time getting clear information.

Slaney, frustrated, goes to his desk to call Boston Center himself.

He's told American 11 is not 'squawking' and that the plane has made a dramatic turn to the south, now heading towards New York Airspace.

Slaney instructs White to update FAA HQ of the hijacking. The duty officer there says security personnel are discussing it with the New England Regional Office. But the system is already off the rails at headquarters. The hijack coordinator is away on travel and so is his number two.

To vets like Slaney and White, it's no surprise.

They roll their eyes.

Slaney tells his staff to set up a teleconference between Boston/New York and Cleveland centers.

It's vital to keep everyone informed on this.

0834

INT. BOSTON CENTER

Close up on Flight 175's transponder as it moves across to the west en route to Los Angeles.

We move across to another screen, Zalewski's.

Controllers watching American 11s radar target over his shoulder, remark on the fact that the plane's speed has increased. But since the transponder is off, they don't know how high he is.

Another controller has a plane in the airspace nearby. Maybe he can see American 11 and estimate his altitude. It's United 175.

A nearby controller turns another plane to put him in a better position to see American 11. United Airlines 175

CONTROLLER

I'd like you to look at your twelve or one- tell me if you see an American 767.

UA 175

Yeah he's about 28 - 29 thousand ft.

CONTROLLER

Okay. Thanks. United 175 turn 30 degrees to the right. I want to keep you away from this guy.

We watch in extreme close up as United 175's transponder signal moves away to safety.

Back to American 11.

CONTROLLER 1

This guy's goin' fast. Look at that.

CONTROLLER 2

Looks like he's navigating down the Hudson.

CONTROLLER 1

Why the hell would he do that?

Then suddenly, another transmission.

TRANSMISSION

Nobody move please. We are going back to the airport. Don't try to make any stupid moves.

It hangs in the air for a beat.

ZALEWSKI

Someone needs to pull these fucking tapes right now!

A startled admin guy leaves.

We follow him, out of the 'U' area. Right turn, down past the watch desk.

ADMIN GUY

We got another transmission. He's going back to the airport. We're pulling the tapes.

He's out and on his way down to the tape room.

At the watch-desk, phones are ringing off the hook. New York Centre is reporting the same strange transmissions.

It's not protocol but the Senior Boston Manager decides to contact the military for assistance. He calls the designated Home Air Defence Centre - North Eastern Air Defence System (NEADS).

INT. NEADS HQ

A phone rings in the NEADS operations center, a large Air Force facility. Responsible for protecting the North Eastern United States.

It's a rectangular, dimly lit, high-ceilinged den. Three rows of radar consoles – about 24 in all – run the length, bifurcated down the middle by an aisle (4 on a side). Techs sit at the radar scopes, plugged in with headsets, facing a wall of 5 big screens 15' high and positioned side by side, about 80' across the wall.

In the "battle cab" that overlooks the operations floor. NEADS commander Col. Bob Marr is in the middle of his morning briefing to his battle staff.

Today's agenda, a Cold War style exercise – operation vigilant guardian - that imagines an attack by Russian bombers.

MARR

We have Bears penetrating the ADIZ [Air Defense Information Zone] up off Alaska. You'll want your tracker techs keeping their eyes open.

A former F-15 pilot Marr is a leader who's liked. This is his domain and the buck stops here. He still wears a flying suit.

Marr notices out of the corner of his eye that something's going on

with a young sergeant down on the floor.

Tech Sgt. Jeremy Powell, 31, wandering near his console, tethered by a long headset cord, has answered the ringing phone.

BOSTON CENTRE

Hi. Boston centre 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.

POWELL

Is this real-world or exercise?

BOSTON CENTRE

No, this is not an exercise. Not a test.

During a war game exercise, the simulations team often try to trip soldiers up. Powell, standing at his console, looks around to see if he can see the "sim" guy pretending to be Boston. Once he confirms that this is *for real* for real, he starts waving his hands.

Up in the battle cab Col. Marr sees him through the glass.

MARR

Go and see what that kids so excited about.

Lt. Col Dawne Deskins goes out to see what's up. Powell says he has a hijack.

DESKINS

A sim?

POWELL

No. *A no-shit hijack!*

Lt. Col. Deskins relays word of the hijacking to Marr who goes into action. But he needs his number two - Where's Nasypany?

The first of two urgent calls goes out on the PA system.

INTERCOM

Major Nasypany, report to the operations floor immediately.

Then another.

INTERCOM

All operations personnel report to the ops room immediately. All operations personnel report to the ops room.

Meanwhile the radios begin to buzz with overlapping conversations, updating Marr with information.

DESKINS

I'm getting reports from Boston of a possible hijack.

MARR

Any call signs?

DESKINS

It's a 757 200 series. Don't know how many people. Coming out of Boston headed for L.A.

Major Kevin Nasypany, Marrs top officer on the ops floor, is a straight shooter in his forties. As he enters the ops room and dashes onto the floor, he is immediately briefed by Marr.

MARR

We got a reported hijack out of Boston in progress. He's not squawking – find him.

As troops begin to stream in, Nasypany hustles them to take up positions.

NASYPANY

This is real world. I want people on scopes. ID people, I want you on comms. I want you on phones. I want to find out where this guy is.

TECH 1

They say he's leaving Boston Center's airspace headed towards New York.

He turns to his weapons crew. Punch up the nearest fighter base – Otis off Cape Cod – and order their two "alert" jets to battle stations. Sgt. Powell springs into action.

Marr is standing, looking out onto the floor. He confirms the order.

Otis asks the question of the hour.

OTIS

Is this real world or sim?

MARR
Real world. Definitely real world.

INT. NEWARK CONTROL TOWER

Unaware of the trouble developing around American Flight 11, Tower Controller Greg Callaghan prepares Flight 93 for take-off.

TOWER
United 93, runway two-two right. After departure, turn left to one-ninety for two-point-five, right to two-twenty.

0837 INT. FLIGHT 93

As Flight 93 approaches the head of the runway, Jason Dahl acknowledges the tower.

DAHL
Okay. Left to one-ninety for two-point-five, then right to two-twenty.

TOWER V/O
United 93, two-two right, you are cleared for take-off. G'day."

0838 EXT/INT. OTIS AIRFORCE BASE

Pilots grab their flight gear and prepare battle stations. Sprinting out to the waiting F-15s.

0840 INT. FLIGHT 93

Pilot Jason Dahl instructs the cabin crew to prepare for takeoff.

Senior stewardess, Welsh sits in the jump seat for first class. Bay and Green, the jump seats between first class and coach and Lyles and Sandy Bradshaw sit in the rear galley.

0841 INT. NEW YORK ATC

A close-up of American 11's transponder as it enters New York Center's airspace. We hear the sound of an air traffic controller.

CONTROLLER

American 11, if you hear New York, Contact New York Center on one-two-five-point-three-two.

We pull out to reveal New York Centre controller Dave Bottiglia at his scope watching the aircraft's progress down the Hudson towards New York City.

A manager walks up and leans into Bottiglias scope.

CONTROLLER

See that target right there? Boston's logging him a hijack. American 11 out of Logan. They think he's going back to the airport. Watch him every step of the way and clear everything ahead.

Bottiglia begins clearing traffic out of American 11's way. As he works his scope, we see in extreme c/u the transponder of another airplane enter his airspace.

It's United 175.

UAL175

New York UAL 175 heavy.

BOTTIGLIA

UAL 175 go ahead.

UAL175

Yeah we figured we'd wait to go to your center. Ah, we heard a suspicious transmission on our departure out of Boston, ah, with someone, ah, it sounded like someone keyed the mikes and said ah everyone as stay in your seats.

BOTTIGLIA

Oh, okay. I'll pass that along over here.

Bottiglia returns to his main priority – tracking American 11 as it closes on New York.

Across the screen United 175's transponder quietly makes its way to the West.

Forgotten.

INT. BOSTON CENTER TAPE ROOM

The Admin guy is still trying to thread the reel-to-reel tape to play back the transmissions from American 11.

In his haste, his fingers slip and the tape tears.

"FUCK!!!"

0842

INT. COCKPIT. FLIGHT 93

Dahl eases the throttle back.

Flight 93's twin turbo fan Pratt & Whitney jet engines unleash 128,000lbs of thrust.

HOMER

Good on both engines.

More than 25 minutes late the plane finally begins to move.

HOMER

Groundspeed 80 knots....

100 knots.

120 knots.

0846

INT. CABIN. FLIGHT 93

Seasoned travelers read their books, and papers, while others grip their armrests nervously as the plane thunders down the runway.

Burnett feels the acceleration pushing him into his seat. Folds his paper and closes his eyes. At last a moment of rest.

At the rear of the plane Bradshaw checks her belt, smiles at Lyles.

We are close to full throttle now as we settle on Jarrah, eyes, closed head bowed.

Deep in prayer. Ancient Suras of war and victory.

Give us victory and may the ground shake under their feet.

Flight 93 powers up into the clear blue skies.

INT/ EXT. OTIS AIRFORCE BASE

The two F15s are ready to take off. All they need is a position, a target.

0846

INT. NEADS HQ

Back at NEADS Marr and Nasypany are pushing their people to find one.

NASYPANY

Come on, find this guy. It's a big fucking plane. American Airlines. Where's he at? What's he doing?"

One Tech calls Boston Center.

NEADS

This is Huntress. We need some information. We need a call sign on the possible hijack.

BOSTON

American 11. Last altitude we saw him at was two-nine-zero.

NEADS

Do you have a Mode 3?

BOSTON

No. We have the primary target only. We don't have any Mode 3 at all.

NEADS

Do you know where he's going?

BOSTON

No idea at all. He's headed towards Kennedy. About 40 miles out of JFK... He's having a tough time talking because they are making threats to the cockpit... The original code was fourteen-forty-three.

Meanwhile Otis Air Force Base Controllers are pushing for information.

OTIS

I don't know where I'm scrambling these guys to! I need a point. I need a direction. I need a destination.

NEADS

We've got to get a position on this guy. He was right there at the Z-point. He was heading one-nine-zero. Let's start hitting up tracks all around that Z-point.

NEADS (TO OTIS)

I'm gonna give you a Z-point. Just head them there.

OTIS

He's not squawking. He's not squawking. We can't find him.

NEADS

We're trying to locate this guy. What we're gonna do is light up every track from 29 thousand heading one-nine-zero.

Marr radios down to the floor.

MARR

Do we have radar yet?

NASYPANY

No, We're working on it.

NEADS controllers search their scopes in vain for American 11. But it's odd. Unfamiliar. For fifty years they've look out – across the oceans – for targets, threats. They're not used to looking inside.

Not used to it at all.

0846

INT. FLIGHT 93

Flight 93 rises to the northeast on a forty-five degree heading, then turns another twenty degrees to the right and follows that path four miles south towards Manhattan.

Sandra Bradshaw is still chatting with Lyles at the back of the plane.

Up front, Thomas Burnett glances out of the window as the plane banks. Then gets out a file. A balance sheet.

Jarrah stares out the window. Off to the right, the towers of the World Trade Centre pass behind the plane slowly diminishing in the distance.

Still intact.

His mind races. Has the plan failed?

A thousand thoughts.

0846

INT. NEW YORK CENTRE

In extreme close up we see American 11's radar return.

As we pull out we find New York Center Controller Bottiglia tracking American 11 as it bears down the Hudson Valley towards Manhattan, controllers and managers gather over his shoulder.

CONTROLLER 1

Groundspeed slowing.

CONTROLLER 2

He's descending...he's landing JFK?

CONTROLLER 1

Or Newark?

The radar blip is right on New York.

CONTROLLER 1

Got to be JFK.

And then, suddenly -

American 11 disappears from the screens.

BOTTIGLIA

Where the hell did he go?

INT. NEADS HQ

On the floor, one of the ID techs gets a call. It's Boston with an update:

NEADS

Go ahead, Boston.

BOSTON CENTRE

Huntress, we've lost the target. I repeat, American 11, we're not seeing him. He may have descended below radar coverage. Last known position was 8 miles north of JFK.

Meanwhile in the battlecab Nasypany is telling Marr that Otis are ready to go.

Marr grabs a 'red switch'- and encrypted phone line – and punches in a code. It puts him through to General Larry Arnold at NORAD.

MARR

I need authority to get these guys in the air.

Arnold gives authorization and says they'll work out the permissions later.

Marr's got his scramble. He passes it to Nasypany.

Let's at least get these guys in the air.

EXT. OTIS AIRFORCE BASE

The F15s blast off into the morning sky.

0846

INT. NEWARK CONTROL TOWER

Controller Callahan is busy with routine traffic when the shout-line rings. Its New York ATC.

NEW YORK TOWER

We've lost an aircraft over Manhattan. Can you see anything out your window?

He scans the skyline.

Nothing.

Out of the corner of his eye, Callahan sees smoke rising over the Manhattan skyline.

CALLAHAN

Jesus! Look at that.

ANOTHER CONTROLLER

Looks like the World Trade Center.

CALLAHAN

How they gonna put that out?

0850

INT. NEW YORK ATC

An extreme close up of Flight 175's transponder signal traveling west.

Pull out to find Bottiglia. Now he's getting calls from other planes. One is hearing an ELT – an Emergency Locator Transponder – indicating a crashed aircraft in the vicinity.

Another calls in, asking about smoke coming off of Manhattan.

Soon there are reports that a light plane may have hit the World Trade Center.

Bottiglia turns to the controller next to him.

BOTTIGLIA

You've got to take my planes. I've got a hijack and a crash going on here.

In the confusion, no one notices Flight 175's transponder code suddenly change.

INT. FLIGHT 93

Flight 93 continues to climb uneventfully, blissfully unaware of the chaos behind.

Jarrah checks his watch again.

They are late. Very late.

INT.NEADS HQ

A computer maintenance tech who'd been watching CNN pokes his head into the battle cab.

TECH

Col. Marr, CNN's reporting a light plane hit the Trade Center. You might want to have a look.

Marr instructs one of his staffers to have them put CNN up on one of the screens on the Ops Floor. He leans close to the glass so he can see.

Down on the floor, his staff are still trying to find out what happened to American 11.

0851

INT. NEW YORK ATC

So is Bottiglia.

But now he notices the transponder change on United 175. It is no longer "squawking."

Bottiglia asks 175 to go back to the proper code.

BOTTIGLIA

United 175, contact New York Center on 23-75

No response.

He asks again. Still no response.

Following standard protocol, he makes a call to get the United to jog his transponder.

BOTTIGLIA

United 175 – New York Center. Recycle transponder, squawk 27-39.

No response. He calls him again.

BOTTIGLIA

United 175 – New York... United 175 – New York.

Bottiglia checks his radio equipment is working. It's fine. Calls to a colleague.

BOTTIGLIA

Anything from United 175? I'm not getting a squawk from him?"

COLLEAGUE

Nothing. He's 'NORDO.'

BOTTIGLIA

For fuck sake as if I haven't got enough going on.

0851 INT. FLIGHT 93

Jarrah looks back and catches Haznawi's eye.

They both know. They are speeding away from their target with every second.

0854 EXT. F-15 COCKPIT

Lacking a target and unable to penetrate New York's busy civilian air traffic corridors, the F-15's are vectored toward military-controlled airspace off the Long Island coast and told to 'hold as needed'.

INT BOSTON CENTER

The admin guy, still in the Tape Room, finally mends the tape and gets the recording to play back.

Suddenly the room is filled with the voice of Mohammed Atta, leader of the 9/11 mission.

"We have some planes. Just stay quiet and you will be okay. We are returning to the airport".

Rewind

"We have some planes..."

Rewind

"Some planes.."

Rewind

"planes.."

Hard cut as he rushes out of the Tape Room, up the stairs, barreling, almost running, to the watch desk.

ADMIN GUY

They're saying planes....some planes as in plural.

INT HERNDON COMMAND CENTER

A supervisor from the East Desk, is rushing out of his area towards Ben Sliney.

SUPERVISOR

Boston Centre just pulled the tapes, the hijackers said planes.

SLINEY

What the fuck does that mean?

SUPERVISOR

They played back the transmissions from American 11. The hijacker said. 'We have some planes.' As in more than one plane.

A beat. As this registers.

SLINEY

Are you sure about that?

SUPERVISOR

Positive.

Sliney feels his adrenaline kick up a notch.

Suddenly everyone's got questions. What does that mean? How do they know? Which planes, where?

Sliney tries to inject order and process into the situation.

SLINEY

Okay. First of all, we need to confirm this. Call Boston. See if there's anything more. Someone call headquarters, make sure they know about this, I don't want any mistakes.

SUPERVISOR

You've got it.

The huddle disperses into action.

SLINEY

What's the news on 11? Anything?

WHITE

Nothing confirmed yet. New York's saying a light plane out of Ploughkeepsie just hit the Trade Centre.

SLINEY

A what?

Sliney stands there, bemused. Looks up at the map with 5,000 high-altitude jets in the sky over America.

Planes!?!

0855

INT. NEW YORK ATC

Meanwhile, Bottiglia's calling Boston Center to see if United 175 has gone back to his original frequency. It hasn't.

BOTTIGLIA

I don't like this...he must have an electrical problem or something. FedEx 12-72 turn 30 degrees left...

Bottiglia hands over more flights and tries to contact United 175 again.

No response.

All of a sudden, he sees United 175 make a sharp turn, and climb off course.

Bottiglia radios through to his arranger, his heart in his throat.

BOTTIGLIA

Mike get over here. I just lost United 175. I think we got another hijack.

In the same moment, a controller, Curt Applegate, who's sitting opposite Bottiglia and a few scopes down, notices the radical turn and shouts.

APPLEGATE

Hey Dave, there's an untracked target five miles east of Allentown.

Bottiglia starts turning planes out of the way of UAL 175.

BOTTIGLIA

Delta 25, I have an airplane – we don't know what he's doing. I'm going to have to turn and climb you.

He punches up the next sector he feeds to..

BOTTIGLIA

Hey, you see this target. I don't know who it is. Watch this guy. I think it's United 175, but I'm not sure.

CONTROLLER

Where's he heading?

BOTTIGLIA

Looks like New York to me.

Bottiglia, fixated on his screen, feels the fear leap a notch as United 175 starts descending ominously through heavy traffic, towards New York City.

That's when another controller two scopes to Bottiglia's right, Chris Tucker, erupts.

To his horror he realizes that United 175 is on collision course with another airliner, Delta 2315, bound for Tampa Florida. He screams into his headset.

TUCKER

Delta 2315. New York Center. Traffic 2 o'clock. 10 miles closing. I think he's been hijacked. Take any evasive action necessary. Repeat ten miles closing... 2 o'clock. Take immediate evasive action!

No one looks at Tucker – they look instead at their screens collectively holding their breath as the two blips of light converge on the screen - airplanes full of people hurtling towards each other in the sky at 500 miles-per-hour.

Bottiglia stares as they meet.

Then separate again.

The two aircraft have missed by less than 200 feet.

0857

INT. FLIGHT 93

In the cockpit, we hear New York Center welcome United 93.

CONTROLLER

United 93, New York Center. Good morning.

Pilot Jason Dahl turns off the seatbelt sign.

Bradshaw and Lyles begin to serve a hot breakfast of omelettes and waffles to the passengers in coach.

Burnett looks up, coffee would be nice.

Jarrah watches the trolley begin its slow progress through first class.

Nothing can happen while it blocks the aisle.

0901

INT. HERNDON COMMAND CENTER

White takes an urgent call.

WHITE

We got New York on Ben.

SLINEY

Go ahead.

The call is put on speaker.

SLINEY

What you got?

NEW YORK

I think we've got another hijack. We have several situations going on here. It's escalating big, big time. We need to get the military involved with us. We're, involved with something else, we have other aircraft [meaning Flight 175] that may have a similar situation going on here.

Ben Sliney and John White exchange glances. Another hijack?!?

SLINEY

Have you notified regional managers?

NEW YORK

I can't get through. They're busy discussing American 11.

SLINEY

Any news on that?

NEW YORK

We're hearing it may have gone into the World Trade Centre.

SLINEY

Jesus.

Behind them is the ubiquitous big screen, flickering with 5,000 airplanes.

White crosses the room. Orders up CNN on one of the large screens. Something big is happening in New York.

Now we follow White across the floor to Sliney. But Sliney's already guessed.

WHITE

Ben. That's confirmed. A commercial went into the World Trade Centre.

SLINEY

Must have been American 11.

A beat and then.

SLINEY

On my first day.

INT. NEW YORK ATC

Now it's really cranking up to a pitch.

Controllers are gathering around Bottiglia watching United 175, descending fast into New York.

APPLEGATE

Look at him. He's dropping like a manhole cover.

It's starting to sink in: the controllers have no control. This guy is fucking reckless. Some of the controllers are getting pissed off. One slams his fist down on the console.

CONTROLLER 2

Those motherfuckers! This is bullshit!

Just then a manager hovering behind Bottiglia, gets a phone call.

MANAGER 1

They're confirming, a commercial airliner hit the World Trade Center.

MANAGER 2

A commercial airliner?!?

Suddenly, it registers.

APPLEGATE

This fucking guy's gonna crash.

CONTROLLER 1

Here comes number two. This guy's dropping 6 thousand feet a minute...

APPLEGATE

He's not going to Kennedy. Holy shit.

As United 175 dives, another controller calls out altitudes every 12 seconds as his radar updates.

ANOTHER CONTROLLER

He's doing 8 thousand feet a minute... He's at 10 thousand feet a minute... He's not going anywhere but into the ground.... He's going in. He's going straight into Midtown.

0902

INT. NEWARK TOWER

The 'shout phone' goes and Callahan grabs it.

VOICE

Where's United 175. Can you see him out your window?

Callahan scans the skyline.

He sees the incoming plane - beyond the New Jersey shipyards - flying low and fast up the Hudson river.

He grabs some binoculars and tracks it towards the Manhattan skyline.

Callaghan can't believe what he's seeing.

Its flight path is erratic banking left, then right as it streaks across the water.

Then it seems to level off slightly before starting to accelerate towards the burning WTC.

Seconds later United 175 slams into the South Tower of the WTC.

CALLAHAN

Oh my God! He just hit the building.

0903

INT. HERNDON COMMAND CENTRE

All across the floor technicians stare in horror as a giant screen captures the fireball.

Sliney's face, incredulous at what is unfolding in front of him.

INT. NEADS HQ

Marr watches as his operations floor erupts in profanity and disbelief, as they watch the huge explosion on a screen.

Then a terrible silence that seems to last forever.

Incredulous technician's stare open mouthed at the flames.

Up in the battlecab Marr breaks the silence.

MARR

Come on guys – get back to work. We got a job to do.

America is under attack.

0903

INT. FLIGHT 93

In the cockpit pilot Jason Dahl reaches cruising altitude at 35,000 feet and puts on the autopilot.

He chats to co-pilot Leroy Homer about sports, about overtime and other pilot stuff.

In the cabin Senior Stewardess Deborah Welsh makes her in-flight introductions:

DEBORAH WELSH

Ladies and gentlemen, shortly we will commence our in-flight entertainment service our movie today is "A Knights Tale" starring Heath Ledger – the story of 'an untrained squire who dreams of becoming a knight and assumes a false identity to compete in jousting tournaments.

The audio for the movie can be found on Channel 1, and a Spanish version can be found on Channel 10. After this we will be playing a short-subject television comedy, followed by taped NBC news and other popular TV programming.

We do have one request from you, that you respect the captain's judgement. As long as he does have the seat-belt sign on we request that you stay in your seat with your seat belt fastened. This is for your safety as well as the passengers' around you. At this time we ask that you sit back, relax, and enjoy your flight to San Francisco.

Jarrah is looking intently at the cockpit door waiting to strike, looking for the perfect moment. Just then -

Welsh introduces herself and offers him food.

0905

INT. HERNDON COMMAND CENTRE

Sliney is under pressure.

New York Centre calls, telling him they are declaring 'ATC Zero' no aircraft are permitted to depart from, arrive at or travel through New York's airspace until further notice.

Boston calls too, they are doing the same.

Air traffic begins to back up rapidly across the country, sending the entire National Air Traffic grid into crisis.

It's clear Sliney owns the floor now. When he speaks people listen. He's less than four hours into the job, but the shoes are beginning to fit.

Sliney goes into action, drawing on all his twenty years experience in the business.

Begins rerouting swathes of traffic from state to state. Shouting instructions – working on instinct, trying to grapple with the greatest civil aviation crisis the country has ever faced.

Meanwhile White is on a teleconference passing word of the New York and Boston ground stops to HQ in Washington.

SLINEY

Getting anything from them?

WHITE

Bupkis

Sliney is being boxed in.

All he knows, all he can cling on to is that he has to protect the system, keep everything flying. That's the bottom line.

That's why he's there.

0909

INT NEEDS HQ

Marr too, is in action.

In the battle cab and on the Ops Floor, he and his troops are "spinning up" into war footing. But it's not easy.

There are thousands of potential threats in the air, each one a civilian aircraft. But which are which?

And worse than that the planes that are friendly are simply in the way.

He needs information and airspace, and right now he's dependent on the FAA for both.

Watching the CNN coverage of the burning towers, Marr and Nasypany agree. It's time to get some military planes inside the civilian system.

NASYPANY

This is what I foresee that we probably need to do. We need to talk to FAA. We need to tell 'em if this stuff is going to keep on going, we need to take those fighters, put 'em over Manhattan. That's the best thing, that's the best play right now. So coordinate with the FAA. Tell them if there's more out there, which we don't know, let's get 'em over Manhattan. At least we got some kind of play.

He gives orders to tell the FAA to clear a path for the Otis fighters.

MARR

What other jets do we have on alert?

STAFF

Langley has two, sir.

MARR

Okay. Let's get Langley to battle stations.

NASYPANY

I want to get Langley up, shoot 'em over to New York and put them in the CAP.

MARR

No. Let's keep Langley at battle stations. Otis is gonna need some fuel in not too long, and until we can get some tankers up, Langley is our only backup. We'll swap them into the CAP when Otis hits bingo [low fuel].

Marr is being prudent. There's still so much he doesn't know.

INT/EXT. JETS

The Otis F-15s finally receive permission to enter New York airspace.

They exit their holding pattern 115 miles from New York and set a direct course for Manhattan.

0915

INT. FLIGHT 93

Meanwhile United 93 continues it's uneventful progress.

Most passengers are eating - some sleep, some talk. Some read. Some get ready for the movie.

There is a shudder of turbulence as they climb. A few nervous glances. Seats held tightly.

Passenger - Donald Greene is unphased. He has a pilots license - knows how to read an aircraft. Nothing to worry about.

Sandy Bradshaw is chatting with passengers Jean and Donald Peterson at the front of coach. They didn't catch the name of the film.

On the way back she tells CeeCee Lyles.

BRADSHAW

I'm done in ten. I'm taking my magazine. Curl up in one of those empty seats...

Up in first class Burnett is talking to Bingham – work, sports. They have a lot in common.

Mark Rothenberg eases his seat back and unfolds a newspaper.

Jarrah peers over at his three accomplices across the aisle.

Soon.

0920

INT HERNDON COMMAND CENTRE

The entire air traffic system is buckling now as Sliney struggles to deal with the consequences of the New York and Boston ground stops.

On top of that rumours are starting to fly. There are more planes missing. Boston are checking all inter-continental flights going west. Reports of missing or no-show aircraft are starting to flood into the Center.

Slaney directs his people to call all centers and tell them to report anything unusual immediately.

He's moving constantly around the room desperately trying to surf his way through the tidal waves of rumour and misinformation.

He instructs people from the Severe Weather section to put up a white grease board and start a tally of suspicious airplanes as reports come in from far and wide.

By now Slaney is sure it's terrorism. It has to be.

SLANEY

There's no way a United Airlines pilot flies into a building.
No way.

White raises an eyebrow. Shakes his head.

Just then a call from Indianapolis ATC – they have been searching for American 77 for 25minutes, it deviated from its flight plan at 0854. Two minutes later its transponder disappeared. They initially assume a crash. Learning of the hijacks in New York they wonder if maybe it too has been hijacked.

SLANEY

Have you any idea where this aircraft is?

INDIANAPOLIS

Not at this time sir.... We've been searching for primary radar returns along it's course but so far nothing.

SLANEY

Nothing? You mean we've lost it?

INDIANAPOLIS

Sir.....

SLANEY

Well keep looking – alert all centers.

He calls out for 77 to be added to the grease board.

And all the time Sliney can hear that voice in his head- "we have some planes."

But how many more? And where will they attack? And how can he keep his planes flying through this storm?

He goes over to White.

SLINEY

Get on to HQ. Tell them I want to order a ground stop.
We have to buy some time.

0921

INT. COCKPIT FLIGHT 93

Pilot Jason Dahl telexes United dispatcher Ed Ballinger a routine ACARS message from the aircraft.

MESSAGE

Good mornin'..nice clb [climb] outta EWR [Newark airport]
after a nice tour of the apt [apartment] courts y [and] grnd
cntrl. 20 N EWC At occl [occasional] lt[ligh] chop. Wind
290/50 ain't helping. J.

INT. CABIN FLIGHT 93

Burnett looks up from his spreadsheets. Sees Al Nami across the aisle, hands fidgeting on an armrest. Al Ghamdi next to him.

Thinks nothing of it.

0923

INT NEADS HQ

Meanwhile in NEADS Marr is also dealing with rumour and confusion.

Unaware of the missing Flight 77, he gets confused reports that Flight 11 is still airborne and moving towards Washington.

BOSTON CENTER

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

American 11 is still in the air?

BOSTON CENTER

Yes.

NEADS

On it's way towards Washington?

BOSTON CENTER

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

NEADS

Okay.

BOSTON CENTER

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?

BOSTON CENTER

No, he is a hijack.

NEADS

American 11 is a hijack?

BOSTON CENTER

Yes

NEADS

And he's going into Washington.

BOSTON CENTER

This could be a third aircraft.

A third aircraft? On it's way to Washington? The information shoots up the chain. Marr is stunned.

MARR

What the fuck is going on here? If American 11 is still flying who was the first plane into the World Trade Centre. If only the FAA could make up their minds.

Nasypany immediately scrambles the Langley fighters to the Baltimore area in order to intercept the reported Southbound American 11 on its way to Washington.

NASYPANY

Okay, American Airlines is still airborne – 11, the first guy. He's heading towards Washington. Okay, I think we need to scramble Langley right now and I'm going to take the fighter from Otis and try to chase this guy down if I can find him. Head them towards the Washington area... If they're there then we'll run on them... These guys are smart.

EXT. LANGLEY AIRFORCE BASE AIRSTRIP

The Langley F15 pilots Captain Honey and Major Lou prepare for take off.

0924 INT/EXT. JET. SKY OVER MANHATTAN

Meanwhile the two Otis F-15s reach Manhattan and establish a Combat Air Patrol.

From the lead cockpit the pilot can see the World Trade Centre Towers ablaze in the distance.

0924 INT. CLEVELAND ATC

Close up on Flight 93s transponder as it arrives into Cleveland airspace. America's busiest air traffic crossroads. We pull out to meet the Cleveland controller as he accepts the aircraft.

CLEVELAND CONTROLLER

Flight 93. This is Cleveland centre on seven two five zero.

0924 INT. COCKPIT FLIGHT 93

Flight 93 replies.

DAHL

Morning Cleveland, United Ninety-three with you at, three-five-oh (35,000 feet), intermittent light chop.

CLEVELAND

United ninety-three, Cleveland, roger.

Leroy Homer sees an ACARS message flash up on the screen for him.

MESSAGE

Your wife wants to know if you're okay.

Tears the message off. That's odd. She's never sent a message before.

A few minutes later another message flashes up. Dahl prints it out. It's from United dispatcher, Ed Ballinger.

MESSAGE

Beware any cockpit intrusion –
Two A/C hit World Trade Center.

Dahl shows the message to Homer.

DAHL

What the hell does that mean?

HOMER

Something obviously going on in New York.

Dahl punches in a reply.

MESSAGE

Ed confirm latest message plz– Jason.

0925

INT OPERATIONS CENTRE HERNDON

Silence up above. Chaos down below.

Slaney's in the middle of it. Waiting for that phone to ring. For a decision to be made. For something to be done.

He buttonholes the Air Force "bird" colonel based in Herndon and asks him if he knows anything.

He doesn't and retreats to his cipher-locked office, to seek advice.

On the white board the numbers of suspect aircraft are mounting.

Boston ATC are calling. After reviewing all trans-continental departures out of Boston Logan they too have a missing plane - a possible hijack - Delta 89.

Meanwhile American 77 is still missing heading who knows where? Sliney looks at the map. Could it be Chicago? The Sears Tower perhaps?

Sliney walks over to White, who's on the phone with FAA.

SLINEY

Anything?

White just rolls his eyes.

Sliney looks at the screens filled with thousands of tiny dots. At the room full of people looking to him, their frustration peaking. He's got to do something.

SLINEY

No one else takes off. I want a groundstop immediately.

WHITE

You got it.

At least they've bought some time.

0927

INT. FLIGHT 93

The toilet near the cockpit is engaged.

Haznawi gets up, hovers by the door clutching a wash bag.

Jarrah watches intently.

The vacant light flashes on and a passenger exits.

Al Nami and Al Ghamdi watch Haznawi go into the toilet.

INT. TOILET FIRST CLASS CABIN

Haznawi begins to unpack from a washbag the pieces that we saw earlier. He unravels the wire and connects it to the battery. Winds red tape around it. Then the children's clay. Buries two clips and connects them to the battery.

He tightens the 'bomb' around his waist with a black belt.

INT. FIRST CLASS CABIN

Jarrah is staring at the 'engaged' light intently.

So is Al Ghamdi. So is Al Nami

The light flicks to 'vacant.'

Haznawi opens the door and exits, the bomb concealed by his jacket.

One last glance at Jarrah, then Al Nami and Al Ghamdi. He takes his seat.

Ready.

INT. COACH /FIRST CLASS CABIN

We follow Deborah Welsh now, as she walks back to the first class galley next to the cockpit door.

Al Ghamdi rises and heads towards the toilet.

Closer.

Closer.

He grabs Welsh, holding a knife to her throat. Turns her and displays her to the cabin.

AL GHAMDI

Allahu Akbar!

For a moment the first class passengers are stunned, not quite understanding.

Mark Rothenberg gets to his feet.

MICKEY ROTHENBERG

Hey listen. Whatever you want there's...

In one swift movement Haznawi, seated behind him, pulls his head back and stabs him savagely in the neck.

Now everyone will understand.

Passengers scream.

Now Al Nami stands too shouting and spraying pepper spray into peoples faces brandishing a knife.

More screams.

Haznawi now opens his jacket, brandishing the "bomb" and screaming at the terrified passengers.

Together they herd the passengers back into coach.

Through all this, Jarrah sits quietly...

INT. GALLEY/ COCKPIT.

Now Jarrah springs to his feet.

Welsh is still being held at knifepoint by Al Ghamdi.

JARRAH

Open the door and no one will get hurt. I want to see the pilot. Do it, or you will die.

The knife is at her throat.

Trained to co-operate in hijack situations Welsh knocks on the cockpit door for access.

Three and one.

INT. COACH/ REAR OF THE PLANE.

In coach people are standing up, wondering what's going on. Trying to find out what the commotion is. Bradshaw is still serving breakfast.

The curtain whips open as terrified first class passengers pour in.

They've got a bomb, they've got a bomb.

Panic spreads through the cabin like wildfire.

At the back of the plane Bradshaw stows the trolley and asks what is going on?

Meanwhile Haznawi and Al Nami are forcing the choking passengers down the plane.

HAZNAWI

Get back. Get back!

Rothenberg falls to the floor in the aisle bleeding heavily. Gronlund calls for anyone to help.

Several passengers grab him and they stagger to the rear cabin.

Eventually people find seats and gaze in shock at the scene of horror unfolding in front of them.

Then the hijackers draw the curtain between coach and first class.

Now they're blind.

0928

INT. FLIGHT 93 COCKPIT

Homer opens the cockpit door carrying his breakfast tray.

With one arm around Welsh's neck, using her body as a shield, Al Ghamdi stabs him.

From his seat, Dahl sees only a mass of bodies. Shouting, grunting, groaning.

INT. CLEVELAND AIR TRAFFIC CONTROL

A Cleveland Controller receives a sudden radio transmission from Flight 93.

Violent. Abstract. Frightening.

The controller responds, "Somebody call Cleveland?"

INT. FLIGHT 93 COCKPIT

Now Homer falls to the floor.

Al Ghamdi steps into the cockpit.

Plunges his knife into Dahl's chest and neck.

In the struggle Dahl knocks the column and keys the radio a second time.

INT CLEVELAND AIR TRAFFIC CONTROL

The controller hears the sound of screaming. Fighting. And a voice

TRANSMISSION

Hey get out of here – get out of here – get out of here.

The controller knows what's been happening in New York. Knows immediately what this is.

It's another hijack.

0929

INT. COCKPIT FLIGHT 93

Jarrah takes the co-pilots seat and grabs the controls. He immediately tries to correct the steep decent that has occurred during the struggle.

The hijackers pull Dahl out from his jump seat. Drag his body out of the cockpit and dump it next to Homer's by the first class galley.

INT. CABIN FLIGHT 93

Passengers panic as the plane starts to pitch erratically. What's going on? What's happening?

Bradshaw and the other stewardesses order people to strap into their seats and stay quiet.

She is still trying to work out what just happened.

INT. COCKPIT FLIGHT 93

Jarrah is frantically trying to disengage the autopilot. Multiple alarms are triggered.

ALARM

Sink rate. Sink rate. Pull up. Pull up.

0930

INT. CLEVELAND ATC

The controller watches Flight 93's sharp decent and tries to raise the pilot with no success.

CONTROLLER

United 93. This is Cleveland Centre

United 93 please respond. This is Cleveland Centre.

He begins a desperate operation to move other aircraft out of Flight 93's path.

0930

EXT. LANGLEY HQ

The two Langley F15s take off heading for Baltimore to intercept American 11, which they believe is en route to Washington.

They know nothing about Flight 93.

INT. NEADS

As the F15s streak towards an encounter with the phantom American 11, Nasypany raises a crucial question with Marr.

NASYPANY

We have hijacked planes. What are we going to do?
Langley is scrambled. I'm gonna have to tell my guys,
what do they do when they get there? What is it - nine's
in the nose?

Marr tells him he's just been on with General Arnold. They're talking about shooting down a commercial airliner.

Nasypany looks up at him.

They're crossing a threshold.

0932

INT. FLIGHT 93

In the cockpit Jarrah is still struggling with the controls.

It's the first time he's ever actually flown a plane. It's not easy. Height and speed vary frantically. Alarms sound as he tries to override the autopilot.

He holds down the microphone, apparently unaware he is heard by Cleveland Center.

JARRAH

Ladies and Gentlemen: Here the captain, please sit down keep remaining sitting. We have a bomb on board. So, sit.

Meanwhile Al Ghamdi watches Welsh as she tends the stricken pilots.

0932

INT. CLEVELAND CENTRE

The Cleveland controller receives Jarrah's message and pretending not to hear, responds:

CLEVELAND CONTROLLER

Calling Cleveland Centre. You are unreadable. Say again, slowly.

As he frantically moves planes out of the way of United 93 he shouts out to his supervisor.

CLEVELAND CONTROLLER

We got another one. United 93...

The supervisor barrels down the aisle to the Management Desk to break the news.

Meanwhile other planes are calling in.

They too have heard the sounds of struggle and death in flight 93's cockpit.

0932

INT. FLIGHT 93

At the back of the plane passengers huddle in groups.

They can see the two hijackers, Al Haznami and Al Nami watching them from a distance.

Occasionally, the hijackers shout warnings and wave what looks like a bomb. But they don't get too close.

Amidst the terror passengers try to work out what happened.

Burnett in first class was one of the few witnesses. But it was all so quick.

Were those knives?

Did they have a gun? There was a bomb too, right? It can't be. How could they get it on the plane? How could this happen? To them? Out in the clear blue sky?

How many hijackers were there? Three? No Four. No three. Are they Cuban? If they're Cuban they'll want to land and negotiate.

No, they were Middle Eastern. Someone remembers there were Arab men in first class - but they're not sure how many.

Burnett tries to inject order and process into the situation. Bingham breaks in occasionally. Everyone wants to help.

We have to gather information.

Meanwhile at the back Wanda Green is telling what she saw to Sandra Bradshaw and the other stewardesses. They also are trying to work out what just happened.

It's a hijacking. The plane will land. A deal, will be struck. Then they will be released. We just have to stay calm. Remember our training - co-operate. Don't draw attention to yourself.

Bradshaw tries to call the cockpit.

No answer.

She replaces the receiver. Looks at her shaking hands. Why me? Why this flight. I want to see my family again.

0932

INT. HERNDON COMMAND CENTRE. DAY

Suddenly White yells at Sliney.

WHITE

We got something.

SLINEY

What?

WHITE

Dulles have got an unidentified aircraft tracking eastward at high speed...into Washington.

"No...Not another one " thinks Sloney.

0936

INT. COCKPIT FLIGHT 93

Al Ghamdi brings Welsh back into the cockpit.

She begins to plead for her life as a new ACARS message flashes across the screen. It's a "High Security Alert."

Just do it. Do it, Jarrah tells Al Ghamdi as he wrestles with the controls.

Struggling to the last, Welsh is killed. A horrendous scene.

As a new message comes in from United dispatch:

"Can dispatch be of any assistance?"

0934

INT NEADS HQ

Up in the battlecab, Marr is organizing logistics, as the Towers burn on the giant screens in front of him.

MARR

Generate. Generate. Generate.
I want planes, tankers, C130s, Tomahawks.
Whatever they've got, I want them....

NEADS controllers cajole, threaten, bribe – anything to get mobilized.

NEADS CONTROLLER

If I could shit an F16 right now I would.

A gigantic military machine is stirring to life.

0936

INT FLIGHT 93

Sandra Bradshaw sits in the first seat at the back of coach.

She makes a call to United Airlines. At first she's held in an automated queue.

Shit!!

Finally she reaches an operator and tells her that the plane has been hijacked. The hijackers are in the cabin behind the first-class curtain and in the cockpit. They've announced that they have a bomb. They've killed a flight attendant.

She tries to keep calm, professional, act according to training. But it's hard to re-assure anyone when the group of passengers up front tending Mickey Rothenberg say they can't feel a pulse and he's dead.

Tom Burnett also calls. Tells his wife the news. A passenger has been stabbed. Call 911.

Meanwhile, Mark Bingham makes a furtive, hurried call to his mother. Tells her his flight has been hijacked.

MARK BINGHAM

Three guys and they say they have a bomb. You believe me don't you mum?

Sandra Bradshaw moves forward to check on the injured passenger. It's clear he's dead.

Whilst there she looks up towards the front of the plane. At that moment the curtain moves as a hijacker goes back to the cockpit.

She catches a glimpse of two bodies lying on the floor outside the cockpit. Clearly the pilot and co-pilot. She goes into the galley to fetch some water. We see her struggling for composure.

Tom Burnett can see that she has seen something. But what?

Soon word spreads around the plane. Just from the reaction of the stewardesses, observant passengers can tell. This is no ordinary hijack.

The pilots are dead. The hijackers are actually flying the plane.

0936

INT. HERNDON COMMAND CENTRE

Sliney gets word that the unidentified aircraft closing on

Washington is minutes away. A C-130 is tracking him.

Sliney thinks for fuck's sake – where are the military. When is someone going to do something?

This isn't supposed to happen.

Then Cleveland Center are patched in. United Flight 93 from Newark to San Francisco is presumed hijacked. A suspected bomb on board.

Controllers are tracking its progress and moving planes out of its path.

Jesus Christ, thinks Sliney, looking at the white board – that's four.

0936

INT. NEADS HQ

A call comes in from Boston Centre.

A tech runs across the floor towards Nasypany.

TECH

Sir. Reports of an unidentified aircraft closing on Washington.

Nasypany moves to an ID site and hears Boston Centre reporting in.

BOSTON CENTRE

Latest report, aircraft VFR (visual flight rules) 6 miles southwest of the White House – six southwest of the White House – deviating away.

Marr is stunned.

Is this a third plane, or did they miss American 11? He authorizes Nasypany to take immediate control of FAA airspace and clear a path for the two Langley fighters.

NASYPANY

Okay, we're going to turn it up... crank it up... Run them to the White House."

But to his horror he discovers that, the fighters are not headed north towards Baltimore as he instructed, but east over the ocean.

NASYPANY

Where are my Langley guys? Where are my Langley guys?

The weapons tech gives coordinates – 60 miles out over the Atlantic.

NASYPANY

What the fuck are they doing out there?!? I don't care how many windows you break, damn it! Okay, Push them back!

Marr thunders in. It's getting tense on the floor.

MARR

What's going on. Why are you turning planes around?"

NASYPANY

I'm getting bad shit from the FAA.

EXT. JETS OVER WATER.

The Langley fighters turn and streak back towards Washington.

0936

EXT .WASHINGTON DAY

The Capitol Building.

People jogging, tourists taking photos of monuments.

Defenceless.

INT. WASHINGTON REAGAN AIRPORT TOWER.

Chris Stephenson, controller-in-chief at Reagan Tower is on the "shout-phone" speaking with the Secret Service giving them an update on the inbound aircraft.

STEPHENSON

Five miles out from the White House.

Stephenson can see it on the radar now closing.

STEPHENSON

Four miles from the White House.

Chris Stephenson checks the skyline as news comes in that the Secret Service are evacuating the White House

STEPHENSON

Yeah I've got a visual.

He picks out American 77 flying fast and low.

It banks and circles with chilling precision.

Picking its moment.

Then it disappears behind a building in nearby Crystal City and explodes sending a fireball 200ft into the air.

INT. NEADS

A desperate scramble.

Marr wants updates on the fighters. How far are they from Washington? What's their ETA?

Where is the target?

But it's too late.

0938

INT. LANGLEY FIGHTERS

The Langley fighters finally arrive over Washington. The pilots see smoke rising from the Pentagon as they circle the capital.

PILOT

Looks like that aircraft crashed into the Pentagon, Sir.

INT. NEADS

The Pentagon.

Nasypany looks at Marr.

Marr takes this in. You can feel what it means throughout the room.

From now on whether it's official or not Marr believes he is at war.

He tells Nasypany - the FAA has no choice now. They have to get out of the way.

0939 INT. FLIGHT 93

Jarrah makes another cockpit announcement.

JARRAH

Uh, is the captain. Would like you all to remain seated. There is a bomb on board and are going back to the airport, and to have our demands. Please remain quiet.

He looks across at Al Nami praying in the cockpit next to him.

Pulls' the control column to the left.

0939 INT CLEVELAND CENTRE

The Cleveland controller responds to Jarrah.

CLEVELAND CENTRE

United 93, understand you have a bomb onboard. Go ahead.

There is no reply.

He sees the plane start to turn.

Where the hell is he going?

0940 INT FLIGHT 93

Burnett looks out of the window. So does Sandy Bradshaw. The plane is definitely making a turn.

They look for landmarks, contours, anything that might enable them to find their bearings.

GREENE

It's turning south-east.

How do you know? Asks a fellow passenger.

GREENE

I'm a pilot.

Meanwhile Thomas Burnett calls his wife for a second time and tells her that the hijackers are in the cockpit. The man who was knifed is dead. He tried to help but felt no pulse.

He is told two planes have hit the World Trade Centre. He relays this information to Mark Bingham and other passengers nearby.

Then he returns to the phone and fires new questions - were they definitely commercial planes? Which airlines? How many?

Panic fights a war with control as it starts to dawn on them that this too might be a suicide mission.

Glick calls his wife to check the details. She reports the same grim facts.

The stewardesses are still telling people to stay calm.

That's not going to work, says Burnett.

Not now.

Sandy Bradshaw looks at him. Knows it's true.

0941

INT CLEVELAND CENTRE

The controller tracks Flight 93 south east towards Washington.

INT NEADS HQ

Marr starts launching jets, but with no clear rules of engagement. There are near-misses between military aircraft and airliners as the jets blast off.

But Marr is focused only on bringing the military into the field. They have to impose themselves on the situation.

He still knows nothing about Flight 93.

0942

INT HERNDON COMMAND CENTRE

Sliney is under pressure as never before.

News of the Pentagon strike is flooding in. It's up there live on the big screens.

The military is stirring into war-mode. They want civilian planes out of their way. Air Force One is now airborne and holding at high altitude. The Vice President has been evacuated from the White House. Military planes are taking off into civilian airspace.

There's a report of a near miss in the South as fighters blast off to protect Air Force One but come dangerously close to a commercial plane.

The military want to own the skies. Sliney can feel it.

United 93 is closing on Washington. Delta 89 is still possibly heading towards Chicago.

There are almost a dozen other suspect aircraft.

But even the groundstop is not enough.

White walks over.

WHITE

It's not working Ben. We can't keep flying through this...

Sliney knows it.

Walks away on his own for a moment.

White knows what he's thinking.

It's not meant to be like this. Strikes, bad weather, system failures - they can all be managed.

But this? This is unique. And it's beaten them.

He walks back to White.

SLINEY

I'm thinking of shutting down the system.

White puts his hand on Sliney's shoulder. Knows the

consequences for Sliney's career if he's wrong. For the first time all day he asks:

WHITE

You sure you want to do that, Ben?

SLINEY

It's our only choice.

A beat.

SLINEY

I'm doing it.

The order goes out. Clear the skies.

0944

INT FLIGHT 93

Burnett leans down beneath the seat and calls his wife for the third time.

He learns that a third plane just hit the Pentagon.

He tells her that a group of passengers are talking about doing something. He doesn't think the bomb is real.

Deena insists he stay quiet, and not draw attention to himself, but Burnett is now determined.

We have to do something, he says, and rings off.

0949

INT HERNDON COMMAND CENTRE

Flight 93 is getting closer.

The specialist on the phone with Cleveland is getting increasingly agitated with each update. He passes them to White who's on the phone with FAA HQ.

Then conflicting reports. Sliney is informed that they have lost track of United 93 over the Pittsburgh area.

SLINEY

You've lost it?

Then the Secret Service calls and says United 93 has hit Camp David.

What that can't be right thinks Sliney. Then another call from Indianapolis.

CONTROLLER

Twenty-nine minutes out of Washington DC.
ETA 10.15

United 93 is still flying.

Someone at HQ has to request military assistance.

FAA HQ

They're pulling Jeff away to talk about Flight 93.

WHITE

Uh, do we want to think, uh, about scrambling aircraft?

FAA HQ

Oh, God, I don't know.

WHITE

Uh, that's a decision somebody's gonna have to make probably in the next ten minutes.

FAA HQ

Uh, ya know everyone just left the room.

Sliney can barely contain his frustration.

Why aren't they making decisions?

And still Flight 93 is closing on Washington.

0949

INT FLIGHT 93

Amidst the terror and panic, a debate rages on the plane.

What are we going to do?

If we do nothing we're gonna die. We have to do something. Burnett, Bingham, Beamer and Glick are all up for trying. They know there's a passenger, Donald Greene, who says he could fly the plane.

The time for "Sit down, be quiet and don't draw attention to yourself." Is long gone.

The time for pre-emptive strike has come.

We have to get them before they get us.

Burnett goes to the back of the plane. Bingham and Glick follow.

They tell Bradshaw and the other stewardesses that they're forming a plan.

BURNETT

Are you prepared for a counter-attack?

They ask Bradshaw if she knows the plane. The strength of the cockpit door. It's weakest point.

They allocate various roles to each other. Sandra Bradshaw offers to boil hot water to throw in the hijackers faces. Wanda Green goes to the fridge and takes out a bottle of wine, wraps it in a towel and smashes its base.

They look around for any other weapons - metal cutlery, crockery, a fire extinguisher.

The fight back will be messy, brutal, improvised.

On the way back the rest of the passengers aware of what's being planned make their views known. A vote of sorts is taken.

Passengers begin to call loved ones, hoping and praying that it's not for the last time.

Marion Britton calls her friend Fred, tells him about the hijack. She knows about the World Trade Centre.

She then passes the phone to the passenger next to her.

Honor Elizabeth Wainio, takes the phone and dials her stepmother.

WAINIO

Mom, we're being hijacked. I just called to say good-bye.

In another area Linda Gronlund is calling her sister.

GRONLUND

Hi, Else, this is Lin. I just wanted to tell you how much I love you. Please tell Mom and Dad how much I love them. I don't know if I'm ever going to get a chance to tell you again in person how much I love you, but I'm really going to miss you.

Next to her, boyfriend Joe DeLuca has just called his father.

Back at his seat now, Tom Burnett also calls his wife for the last time. For the first time there is emotion in his voice.

BURNETT

Pray, just pray, Deena.

INT HERNDON COMMAND CENTRE

A visual report from another aircraft, Flight 93 is now 20 miles northwest of Johnstown, closing on Washington fast.

Sliney is angry now.

They're running out of time.

0955

INT FLIGHT 93 COCKPIT

Jarrah punches a new code into the automatic pilot system. It's the waypoint for Reagan National airport.

Takes out a visual aid from amongst some papers and puts it on the clipboard.

A postcard showing an aerial view of the Capitol Building.

EXT. WASHINGTON DAY

The Capitol building is being evacuated.

Police cars. People hurrying down steps. Loud hailers.

Panic and confusion in the capital.

0957

INT FLIGHT 93

The passengers are waiting until they're over a remote rural area.

Flight attendant Sandy Bradshaw calls her husband. She tells him the flight she's on has been hijacked. She will give up flying if she survives this.

BRADSHAW

We're all back here getting hot water together and getting ready to take over the plane.

Beamer is at an airphone reciting the Lord's Prayer with Verizon operator Lisa Jefferson.

Bingham and Burnett join in nearby.

BEAMER

For mine is the Kingdom, and the power, and the glory,
forever and ever. Amen.

CeeCee Lyles, calls her husband.

LYLES

They're getting ready to force their way into the cockpit.

It is a strange atmosphere. Stoicism, praying, weeping - all the passengers now know the moment is upon them.

Meanwhile up in the cockpit, the hijackers are praying to their God.

Al Ghamdi bursts in and tells them that something is being planned at the back of the plane.

Heated exchanges in Arabic.

With Al Ghamdi in the cockpit, the passengers see the chance they need.

A voice says "Are you guys ready? Let's roll."

The passengers, Burnett and Bradshaw amongst them, rush at Haznawi.

A desperate struggle.

The hijacker is killed and they discover the bomb is fake.

Adrenalin and exhilaration spread like wildfire around the back of the plane.

The pre - emptive strike is working.

Meanwhile Al Ghamdi has come back down the cabin and sees that the passenger revolt has begun.

He runs back towards the cockpit.

Empowered by their first small victory others step up too, fear and adrenalin making it impossible to stay seated.

The passengers charge on towards the cockpit.

A desperate last fight begins.

0958

INT. COCKPIT

Jarrah disengages the autopilot and begins to rock the plane violently from side to side, in an attempt to throw the passengers off balance, as they make their way up to the cockpit.

Still the assault continues.

Jarrah changes tactic and pitches the nose of the plane up and down in order to disrupt the assault.

There are loud thumps crashes, shouts and breaking glass and plates, as passengers are hurled around the cabin.

Still the attack continues.

Now some have reached the galley outside the cockpit door.

Jarrah pitches the nose of the aircraft up and down.

For everyone on board, this has become the flight from hell.

But still the assault continues.

Several passengers try to manhandle a galley trolley into position.

In the cockpit Jarrah stabilizes the plane. Five seconds later he asks –

JARRAH

Is that it? Shall we finish it off?" A hijacker responds,
"No. Not yet. When they all come, we finish it off.

A passenger shouts, "In the cockpit. If we don't, we'll die!"

Sixteen seconds later, another shouts, "Roll it!"

The sound of violent impacts as the dining trolley smashes into the door.

Still the passengers attack.

A hijacker shouts, "Allah is the greatest! Allah is the greatest!" He then asks, "Is that it? I mean, shall we put it down?"

The passengers are almost in the cockpit now.

A hijacker shouts, yes "Put it in it and pull it down!"

The passengers are seconds away from overpowering them.

A hijacker says, "Pull it down. Pull it down."

The airplane heads down; the control wheel turned hard to the right.

A hijacker shouts, "Allah is the greatest. Allah is the greatest."

By now the cockpit voice recording has become an indistinct shriek of wind noise.

The cockpit door opens. Hands grasp desperately for the control column.

Other hands resist as the plane rolls on it's back.

Hijackers and passengers struggle for control of the plane.

It turns nose down and ploughs into an empty field at 580 miles per hour.

HARD CUT TO BLACK.

EXT. SHANKSVILLE. PENNSYLVANIA. DAY

Fade up - an aerial shot of smoke billowing from the ground.
Slowly we begin to hear:

WASHINGTON CENTER

We have reports of another hijack – United 93 out of Newark – we're getting reports they have a bomb on board.

NEADS

A bomb on board? It's United 93?

ANOTHER TECH (in background)

A bomb!

FAA

Correct. United 93. Consider him a hijack.

EXT. SHANKSVILLE. PENNSYLVANIA. DAY

Fade up another view of the smoking ground.

NEADS

I also want to give you a heads-up, Washington.

FAA

Go ahead.

NEADS

United nine three, have you got information on that yet?

FAA

Yeah, he's down.

NEADS

He's down?

FAA

Yes.

NEADS

When did he land? 'Cause we have got confirmation.

FAA

He did not land.

NEADS

Oh, he's down? Down?

FAA

Yes. Somewhere up northeast of Camp David.

NEADS

Northeast of Camp David.

EXT. WASHINGTON. DAY

We begin to hear a montage of different Air Traffic Control frequencies – pilots requesting guidance, clarification, exemption - as all over America civilian planes are forced to land.

The montage builds and builds and builds until finally a single military voice.

VOICE

The Vice President has cleared us to intercept tracks of interest and shoot them down if they do not respond.

We will take lives in the air to save lives on the ground.

EXT. MANHATTAN ISLAND. DAY

Fade up smoke billowing into the sky over Manhattan.

Suddenly, dark fighter jets streak across the sky - powerful, unfamiliar, ominous.