

AMERICA UNDER ATTACK: WHAT HAPPENED

Fliers jam Lambert seeking news, places to stay

Travelers of different
faiths attend Mass
at airport chapel

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Of the Post-Dispatch

Like hundreds of other travelers on flights that took refuge at Lambert Field, Landon Dunn had just landed at the airport when she first heard the numbing tale of airliners as tools of terrorism.

News came to people such as Dunn in bits from quivering flight attendants and pieces from fellow passengers, who had heard this or that on cell phones.

Dunn was on US Airways Flight 1283 Tuesday morning from her home in Charlotte, N.C., to Seattle. It was one of about 20 that turned for Lambert when the Federal Aviation Administration ordered all aircraft nationwide to divert at once for a nearby airport.

"Imagine it," said Dunn as she stood at a US Airways counter. "All over the country, there are people like us who have been dropping from the sky."

Those "drops" often were nerve-wracking. Bob and Carol Joyce of Stony Brook, N.Y. said the flight attendants on a Delta Air Lines flight from New York to Los Angeles had almost no information to offer, other than word of the nationwide grounding.

Bob Joyce watched out the window as pilots on their flight dumped fuel to lighten the plane during the approach over St. Louis. Even so, the pilot "nearly burned out his brakes" stopping the plane on the runway, Bob Joyce said.

Once inside the terminal, the Joyces headed for the Lambert chapel.

"That was a given," Carol Joyce said. "As soon as they announced Mass, that was where we were going."

The brief Catholic service drew an eclectic group of all faiths. Many who gathered for the prayer for the dead and dying had clearly never participated in a Mass before and had to look to the initiated for cues of when to stand and when to kneel.

Five employees of an airport Starbucks — none of them Catholic — came to the chapel when their shop was closed temporarily. They said it was the most appropriate thing to do.

"With everything that's going on, I thought we needed to pray for people," said Debra Long of St. Louis. "I think everyone is of one faith today."

All morning, the mood of restraint and quiet at Lambert was marked by paradox.

As "canceled" notices began to fill up terminal screens, all concourses closed to passengers. News filtered in from the street from people who had been listening to car radios.

Crowds jammed the few locations with televisions. It was a scene reminiscent of the 1950s, when people often gathered outside appliance stores to watch



TEAK PHILLIPS/POST-DISPATCH

John Lytle of Shreveport, La., passes the time at Lambert Field Tuesday after the Federal Aviation Administration grounded all flights after the terror attacks on the East Coast. "We're in a state of crisis we'll just have to work through," said Lytle, who had been set to fly home from St. Louis.



JOHN LOK/POST-DISPATCH

TWA gate agent Rochele Young and Lambert Field employee Dion Conway wait in the luggage claim area to hand out sandwiches and beverages to the many fliers stranded in St. Louis Tuesday.

breaking news on sets in display windows.

Some people begged ticket agents for news. One traveler said a terrified agent spoke only of wanting to get out of the building.

A Firstar Bank branch closed by 9:30 a.m. under order from

headquarters. Many other businesses would soon follow. Other routines carried on — workers in fast food restaurants and shoe-shine stands — stayed busy.

Amid the crowds of the uninformed and the inconvenienced, there were signs of profound grief.

Jay Baez of Elizabeth, N.J., sobbed as he sat in a cafe in the main terminal, dialing his cell phone over and over as news reports blared from a wide-screen TV.

"I have friends who work in the World Trade Center, and I can't reach them," Baez said.

There was grief on the faces of American Airlines employees, who were caught up in knowing that fellow employees were among the dead.

"It's just devastating," said one ticket agent. "I've been with American Airlines for 33 years and I never imagined anything like this could happen."

In the USO's airport lounge, military personnel gathered around a big-screen TV knowing what the events of the morning might require of them.

"I'm going to work," said U.S. Air Force Airman Issac Gonzales of Denver.

Tom Gretencord of Lake Alfred, Fla., who served in World War II, compared the shock to that of Japan's surprise attack on Pearl Harbor on Dec. 7, 1941.

Moments after watching the second World Trade Center tower collapse, Gretencord muttered: "We need to eliminate some people in this world, I can tell you that right now. This is beyond description, beyond words, beyond words."

With each depressing development, people clutched their chests and let out loud gasps. Flight attendants and pilots gathered in groups, shaking their heads. A Catholic nun in her habit paced back and forth, praying.

The FAA ordered a halt to all aircraft takeoffs at 8:25 a.m. St. Louis time. Commercial pilots

were ordered to work with their airlines to find locations to land. An unknown number ended up at Lambert, but an airport official estimated that about 100 aircraft were on the ground by noon — roughly double the usual number. All gates were filled, and about 30 aircraft were parked on the tarmac. On a typical day, 1,400 flights and 54,000 travelers pass through the airport.

One DC-10, presumably on a long-range flight, could be seen dumping two wide streams of fuel that evaporated high above south St. Louis as the pilot shed weight in preparation for an obviously unscheduled landing at Lambert.

In the airport manager's office about 10 a.m., receptionist Dan-nice Hall moved down the line buttons on her telephone set, repeating over and over to callers, "I'm sorry, the airport is totally shut down. I wouldn't fly if I were you."

FAA officials said the groundings would remain in effect indefinitely.

Airport Deputy Director Gerard M. Slay said he thought the staff responded well to the tragedy. "Once we heard what had happened, we immediately put together a plan with the police department and the air carriers," he said.

As part of that plan, 34 planes parked away from the terminal because the gates were full, and passengers were loaded on buses that brought them to the terminal.

By 10 a.m., many of the people who had been stranded in the airport were gone. Others arrived as more planes landed here.

At 10:15 a.m., police dogs and officers roamed the concourses, checking for bombs.

Initially, the confusion led to long lines to speak to ticket agents. As it became apparent that no one was flying anywhere, crowds packed the baggage claim area waiting to retrieve belongings and leave the airport.

By 11:30 a.m., the confusion peaked, as hundreds in the baggage claim area seemed to come to a collective recognition that they were staying in St. Louis indefinitely.

Car rental desks had run out of vehicles. Long lines formed to wait for taxis. Volunteers from Rotary clubs and Masonic groups passed out fliers offering food, transportation and shelter.

Shawn Lankford, a supervisor over baggage handling at Lambert, said the airport "will never be the same. This country will never be the same."

Instead of announcing flight departures and arrivals, the intercom system told passengers how to find overnight lodging.

By early afternoon, the baggage claim area had emptied out, save for the piles of luggage left unclaimed by passengers and guarded by attendants. By then, many passengers had sought refuge at local hotels or in the homes of good Samaritans.

John Hudson, who was flying from Baltimore to Seattle to research family genealogy, figured it would be too difficult to find a hotel, since so many other passengers were booking rooms.

He said, "Me and my buddy that I met on the plane today, we're going to stay here until the airport tells us we have to leave."

Robert Goodrich, Robert Kelly, Ken Leiser and Tim O'Neil, all of the Post-Dispatch, contributed to this report.

Weak airport security allowed deadly takeovers

Experts identify holes
that led to aircraft
being used as bombs

KNIGHT RIDDER
NEWSPAPERS

WASHINGTON — The terrorists who attacked America on Tuesday by turning jumbo jets into giant bombs did so by getting through airport security and sneaking weapons aboard four airliners that took off within minutes of one another.

If the pilots were killed or otherwise incapacitated, it would be relatively simple to steer a jumbo jet into the World Trade Center and the Pentagon, aviation and security experts said. The apparently coordinated attacks exploited an obvious weakness in America's flight system, which was geared more toward finding bombs than preventing hijacking, they said.

"The aircraft itself became the bomb, and therefore a lot of the effort we had been putting into attempting to detect explosives, bombs and the like would have

had no impact here," said Douglas Harris, the chairman of the security consulting firm Anacapa Sciences in Santa Barbara, Calif., and a former member of a National Academies of Sciences study on airport security.

"You could get enough weaponry on board (an airplane) until you can take control of the airplane," said Eric Doten, a former senior Federal Aviation Administration adviser who's now director of the Center for Aerospace Safety Education at Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University in Florida.

One of the passengers aboard the jet that crashed into the Pentagon, Barbara Olson, wife of Solicitor General Ted Olson, said the hijackers were armed with knives and cardboard cutters. She called her husband from the aircraft on a cell phone.

She said the hijackers had herded the passengers and crew, including the pilot, toward the back of the plane.

Olson told her husband that there was more than one hijacker, but made no additional comments.

Over the next few days and weeks, investigators will try to find out how the attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pen-

tagon were staged, but aviation and security experts already were able to identify holes in America's safety and aviation system that allowed the attacks to occur.

In fact, the Department of Transportation's inspector general started an investigation Monday — the day before the attacks — "to assess FAA's efforts for improving passenger and carryon baggage screening at security checkpoints within the United States," according to an internal memo. This came nearly two years after the inspector general warned the FAA of lax airport security, saying it "has been slow to take actions necessary to strengthen access control."

That November 1999 report found that the inspector general's pretend-hijackers "successfully penetrated secure areas by: piggybacking (following) employees through the doors; riding unguarded elevators; walking through the concourse doors, gates and jetbridges, walking through cargo facilities unchallenged; and driving through unmanned vehicle gates."

FAA spokesman Les Dorr said his agency doesn't comment on specific security issues, and he referred questions to the inspector general.

"You can sneak things through that would allow you to pull something like this off," Doten said. "The systems are such that you can definitely get life-threatening devices on airplanes."

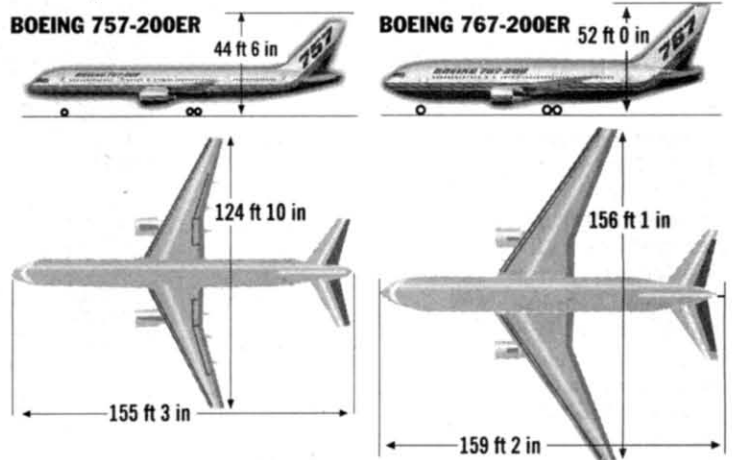
Government officials "certainly have been worried about it, but to my knowledge they haven't been able to come up with something to detect these composite devices," Doten said. "I've always been convinced that if somebody wants to do it bad enough that they could do it."

There is technology that detects some plastic or non-metal weapons, Purdue's Oderman said. InVision Technologies of Newark, Calif., has sold more than 100 such devices to the FAA. But they cost about \$1 million and are fairly slow, so they aren't used much, he said.

The underpaid airport worker is another potential security loophole. After TWA Flight 800 exploded off Long Island, N.Y., in 1996, University of Portland business professor Richard Gritta checked the background screening of lower-level airport workers and found "pretty minimal security on people hired."

If the terrorists had just a little bit of training, even just in a simulator, they could have steered an airborne jet into a building, Doten said.

The planes that crashed



GENERAL SPECIFICATIONS	
PASSENGERS	Up to 239
CARGO	1,670 cu. ft.
CRUISE SPEED	530 mph
FUEL CAPACITY	11,276 gal
MAX. TAKEOFF WEIGHT	255,000 lbs
MAX. SPEED	402 mph

AMERICAN AIRLINES FLIGHT 77	
ROUTE:	Washington to Los Angeles
PASSENGERS:	58
FLIGHT ATTENDANTS:	4
PILOTS:	2
CRASHED:	Into Pentagon
TIME:	9:40 a.m.

UNITED AIRLINES FLIGHT 93	
ROUTE:	Newark, N.J., to San Francisco
PASSENGERS:	38
FLIGHT ATTENDANTS:	5
PILOTS:	2
CRASHED:	Southeast of Pittsburgh
TIME:	10 a.m.

Sources: Boeing, AP

GENERAL SPECIFICATIONS	
PASSENGERS	Up to 255
CARGO	2,875 cu. ft.
CRUISE SPEED	530 mph
FUEL CAPACITY	23,980 gal
MAX. TAKEOFF WEIGHT	395,000 lbs
MAX. SPEED	414 mph

AMERICAN AIRLINES FLIGHT 11	
ROUTE:	Boston to Los Angeles
PASSENGERS:	81
FLIGHT ATTENDANTS:	9
PILOTS:	2
CRASHED:	Into World Trade Center
TIME:	8:45 a.m.

UNITED AIRLINES FLIGHT 175	
ROUTE:	Boston to Los Angeles
PASSENGERS:	56
FLIGHT ATTENDANTS:	7
PILOTS:	2
CRASHED:	Into World Trade Center
TIME:	9:03 a.m.

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