

The Insurrection of United Airlines Flight 93

Part 3

UA93's passengers were boarded early, with only a fifth of the 180 seats booked for flight, perhaps in anticipation of an early departure. Her passengers having been greeted and seated by Flight Attendants cell phones and GTE Seat Back Phones were used to make early morning business and pleasure calls. Some put on their headsets to listen to the radio, totally unprepared for the horrifying developments that would later be frantically broadcast. The phones, radio, small talk and reading would help pass the time before take-off. While Newark's backed-up traffic reputation became again confirmed, the bi-coastal commuter pulled onto the tarmac, idling her engines some 42 minutes for her turn to take-off. For most the day had begun before 5am, never imagining that about 10:10 that morning, it would end in a fiery, black crater, 25 ft into the soft earth of an abandoned strip mine in Southwestern Pennsylvania. Given final clearance at 8:44am, UA93 cleared the runway and quickly made ascension to 35,000 feet. She cruised at 550mph in near perfect flying conditions. Passengers probably spread out for rest and comfort, because of the low occupancy. Were it possible, skies were clear enough to see across the continent. As Captain Dahl switched off the fasten-seat-belt lights, the five flight attendants served coffee, drinks, and a light breakfast. Some passengers would be intently listening to the first reports of 2 aircraft being hijacked from Boston, and 1 from Washington. At 8:45am, American Airlines Flight 11 out of Boston, crashed into the north tower of the World Trade Center, and within seconds they knew about it. The el Qaeda hijackers might have used that time and their cell phones, to talk with each other. No one would have noticed anything unusual. If they were missing their fifth man, they had prepared for that contingency, or calmly made adjustments. At 8:56am American Airlines Flight 77 was hijacked and turned back towards the Pentagon. 9:06am brought with it the news that United Flight 175 out of Boston, had slammed like a guided missile into the Trade Center South Tower. In the cockpit of UA93 Captain Dahl and 1st Officer Leroy Homer were alerted by a radioed text message from Air traffic Controller at O'Hare International in Chicago that other planes had been hijacked. "Beware, cockpit intrusion, it said. They typed a one word reply: "Confirmed", at about 9:15am. Perhaps they waited a bit, and summoned a flight attendant to alert the rest of the crew, but at 9:28am, air traffic controllers on the ground heard muffled screams and shouting in the cockpit. One of the pilots yelled,....."HEY! Get outta' here!" Jarrah, Haznawi, Alghamdi and Alnamii had made their move, stabbing the flight officers and slitting their throats, dragging their bodies into 1st Class. Two of them were pilots, and locked themselves in the cockpit. The remaining pair of guards displayed knives, and one of them had a red box strapped around him, claiming it was a bomb. All four had jumped-up as the attack began by putting on red bandanas. They might have come out of the bathroom, hidden in a jump-seat, taken the cockpit when the flight attendant came up to see the pilots, that's unknown, but at that point, terror and fear prevailed over the passengers, and their flight attendants. Then, in a thick Arabic accent, a voice was heard by the passengers, and accidentally radioed to controllers on the ground. "This is your Captain; there is a bomb onboard. Remain seated, we are returning to the airport." For the