

Newly published audio tapes provide real-time view of 9/11 attacks

By Jim Dwyer, New York Times

For one instant on the morning of Sept. 11, an airliner that had vanished from all the tracking tools of modern aviation suddenly became visible in its final seconds to the people who had been trying to find it.

It was just after 9am, 16 minutes after a plane had hit the north tower of the World Trade Center, when a radio transmission came into the New York air traffic control radar center. "Hey, can you look out your window right now?" the caller said.

"Yeah," the radar control manager said.

"Can you, can you see a guy at about 4,000 feet, about 5 east of the airport right now, looks like he's —"

"Yeah, I see him," the manager said.

"Do you see that guy, look, is he descending into the building also?" the caller asked.

"He's descending really quick too, yeah," the manager said. "Forty-five hundred right now, he just dropped 800 feet in like, like one, one sweep."

"What kind of airplane is that, can you guys tell?"

"I don't know, I'll read it out in a minute," the manager said.

There was no time to read it out.

In the background, people can be heard shouting: “Another one just hit the building. Wow. Another one just hit it hard. Another one just hit the World Trade.”

The manager spoke.

“The whole building just came apart,” he said.

That moment is part of a newly published chronicle of the civil and military aviation responses to the hijackings that originally had been prepared by investigators for the 9/11 Commission, but never completed or released.

Read the whole story