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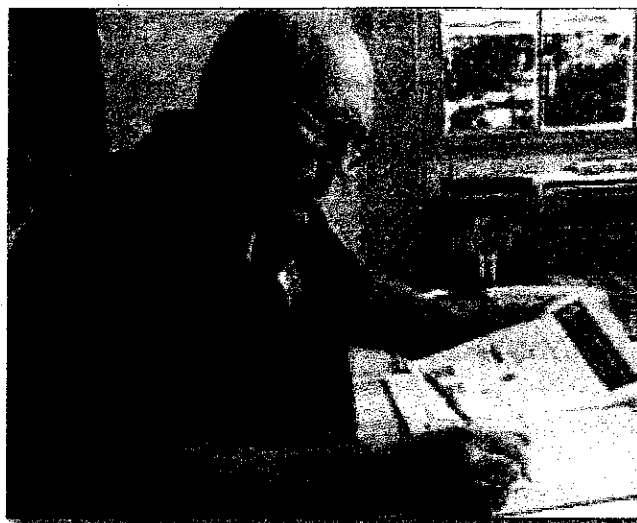
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Security warnings went unheeded

Former FAA
special agent
foresaw
problems at
Logan Airport



Former FAA special agent
Brian Sullivan

By Chris Hansen
NBC NEWS

Sept. 16 — Transportation Secretary Norman Mineta announced Sunday that he has created two new task forces to work on improving air security. One will look at ways to prevent terrorists from gaining access to cockpits, the other will try to come up with a system to stop terrorists from getting aboard planes as two groups did, with such apparent ease Tuesday, at Boston's Logan Airport. Perhaps both of those protective systems would have already been in place at Logan, and elsewhere, if anyone had listened to one man.

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Chris Hansen
NBC CORRESPONDENT

'Think what the result would be of a coordinated attack which took down several domestic flights on the same day... [W]ith our current screening system, this is more than possible. Given time, considering current threats, it is almost likely.'

— LETTER
SULLIVAN WROTE
TO SEN. JOHN
KERRY

FOR most of us, it was a scenario we had never imagined, but not for Brian Sullivan.

"When I saw that plane hit the tower, I knew I failed," says Sullivan. "I failed to get their attention."

A former special agent for The Federal Aviation Administration for 10 years, Sullivan was responsible for checking out the security of FAA radar towers and air traffic control facilities. But after he retired from the FAA in January, he became concerned about the security at Logan International Airport in Boston, as well as other airports throughout the nation.

"I knew the system was vulnerable enough to take down several domestic flights on any given day," says Sullivan. "And I felt in my heart, please don't tell me that there haven't been any hijackings in the past five to ten years — they just decided they weren't going to exploit the system."

He became so alarmed he decided the public needed to know. So this spring he and another former special agent helped a local television crew expose security problems at Logan.

"We were successful in penetrating the security screening check points at Logan nine out of 10 times," says Sullivan. "And if we were successful at doing it, potential terrorist could do it."

This was hardly the first time that questions had been raised about security at Logan. Between 1997 and 2000, undercover FAA inspectors found that Logan airport security employees routinely failed to detect test items like pipe bombs and guns. They were also able to gain access to planes parked overnight, and other restricted areas without even being questioned. In all, there were 136 security violations.

"When we did this video report, and it appeared on television, there was a natural reaction on behalf of the FAA and Massport," says Sullivan. "Two weeks later after the dust settled, the people I was involved with went back and re-tested with basically the same result."

Besides helping the TV journalists, Sullivan says he expressed his concerns to the FAA administrator's hotline. He also says he sent a letter to Massachusetts Sen. John Kerry, a letter that now seems all too prophetic.

From the letter:

"With the concept of jihad, do you think it would be difficult for a terrorist to get on a plane and



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destroy himself and all other passengers? Think for a moment how vital the air transportation industry is to the overall economic well being as a nation. Think what the result would be of a coordinated attack which took down several domestic flights on the same day. The problem is, with our current screening system, this is more than possible. Given time, considering current threats, it is almost likely."

Sullivan says Sen. Kerry responded to his letter and asked the Department of Transportation's Inspector General look into the matter.

"I think Sen. Kerry did get it to the right people and they were about to take action."

The FAA also responded, but in a way that left Sullivan unconvinced that anything would happen anytime soon.

From that letter:

"The New England Region Civil Aviation Security Division continues to work with the air carriers and airport officials at the Boston Logan International Airport to address security issues raised by the video presentation."

That letter Sullivan provided to us is dated August 20. Just three weeks later, the results of the scenario that Sullivan had warned about were there for everyone to see.



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After the disaster, Massachusetts airport authorities said that Logan Airport met all security requirements and had been as secure as any other airport in the country. Sullivan doesn't buy it.

"There were many others out there that saw this potential and have been begging the government to get us to a level of requisite

security a height of security," says Sullivan, "where a terrorist who was doing surveillance would have looked and said, wait a minute, we need to move onto a softer target. Obviously, they thought Logan, Newark, and Dulles were places they could exploit.

The only thing Sullivan hadn't thought of was

that the hijackers would choose to crash the planes into two towers filled with people.

"How can I put my mind — my thought, my mind, in their head, in the mind of a sick bastard who believes so much in jihad that if I kill the infidel, women, children, people at work, if I kill the infidel, I go to heaven? I don't think so," says Sullivan.

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These days, Sullivan watches the images of devastation, heartbroken not just what he sees, but at what he couldn't

prevent.

Now, of course, no security expense is spared. Three hundred state troopers have been called in. Logan Airport is on high alert, proof that Sullivan may have been wrong about one thing he said in his letter to his Senator: "We don't have to wait for a tragedy to occur to act."

An FAA spokesman confirms that Brian Sullivan raised security concerns prior to the hijackings, but the spokesman was not able to provide details Sunday on how the agency followed up.

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