AIR TRAFFIC CONTROL CAREER RECORD (1987–2002)

Robert S. Totman

MILITARY SERVICE — U.S. ARMY (1987–1990)

- **Specialization & Honors:** Graduated Air Traffic Control training as the **Distinguished Honor Graduate.**
- **Certifications:** Obtained **FAA Control Tower Operator Certificate (CTO),** fully qualifying in both Fixed Base and Tactical ATC environments (Earned the moniker *"Ace"*).

SAN JUAN CERAP (ZSU) — AREA 1 (1990–1996)

- **Operating Initials: Romeo Tango**
- **Duty Timeline:** FAA Entrance on Duty, ATC, November 17, 1990; Promoted to New York ARTCC (ZNY) in 1996.
- **Primary Responsibilities:**
    - Provided safe, orderly, and expeditious flow of air traffic across various RADAR and non-RADAR environments.
    - Certified **Full Performance Level (FPL)** on December 11, 1991, by mastering the numerous ATC sectors that compose Area 1.
    - Managed non-radar "D-Board" procedures, WATRS (West Atlantic Route System), South American overflight traffic flows as well as numerous terminal airport environments across Hispaniola, Puerto Rico, St. Thomas, St. Croix, the British Virgin Islands and the Dutch & French Caribbean Islands.

MAJOR HISTORICAL EVENTS & DISASTERS WORKED:

- **American Eagle Flight 5456 (June 7, 1992):** Worked Eagle 5456, providing radar vectors around adverse weather in mountainous terrain and issuing direct warnings to the crew regarding severe localized weather prior to the crash (5 fatalities).
- **Birgenair Flight 301 (February 6, 1996):** Worked Birgenair 301 in conjunction with Santo Domingo (MDSD), **initiating** and managing critical disaster handling and coordination for the Boeing 757 crash into the Puerto Rico Trench, the deepest part of the Atlantic Ocean (189 fatalities). *Just 5 months prior to TWA800, aka, Page 2.*
- **Presidential Flight Support:** Utilized Top Secret Security Clearance, working **Air Force One** and Airspace management including VIP (the Pope, U2-Dragon Lady, etc.) movement support across the Caribbean footprint.

(Adrenaline + weak part caused co-pilot to slam throttle into full reverse instead of idle. They lived another 10 seconds.)

(A wasp nest killed them all.)

NEW YORK ARTCC (ZNY) — AREA E (1996–2002)

- **Operating Initials: Echo Tango**
- **Operational Environment:** RADAR and non-RADAR Air Route Traffic Control, managing high-density domestic and oceanic control of air traffic.
- **Service Timeline:** Promoted from ZSU in 1996; Certified **Full Performance Level (FPL)** in Area E on January 20, 1998.

Area E Sectors:

- **Sector R66 (MANTA):** Heavy oceanic and domestic arrival/departure sector for JFK, EWR, LGA, and other surrounding New York metropolitan airports, while handling tactical traffic, holding patterns, and coastal transition routes.
- **Sectors 87, 88, 89, & 90:** Oceanic non-RADAR sectors managing offshore Atlantic traffic flows, procedural oceanic separations, and WATRS route structures.

Geographic Span & Operational Continuity:

- **Seamless Boundary Link:** ZNY Sector 89 shares its southern boundary with ZSU's Sector 4 northern boundary, linking the Caribbean CERAP directly to New York ARTCC offshore airspace.
- **12-Year Airspace Footprint:** Spanning twelve years of continuous controller service across ZSU and ZNY controlled airspace, *"Surface to Unlimited,"* extended from south of Puerto Rico (midway to Venezuela) all the way north to the coastal waters of New York.

MAJOR HISTORICAL EVENTS & DISASTERS WORKED:

- **TWA Flight 800 (July 17, 1996):** Worked at ZNY, Assisting R66 (MANTA) during the loss of the Heavy Boeing 747 in the coastal waters of New York. The explosion took place in an adjacent sector (ZBW, SARDI) with MANTA's overlapping coverage and required both sectors' specialists **initiating and maintaining SAR**. Witnessed a live television interview during a break in the cafeteria featuring military pilots in a trailing commercial aircraft who reported seeing a missile streaming toward the Heavy B747 prior to the explosion (230 fatalities).

SEPTEMBER 11, 2001 OPERATIONS - NEW YORK ARTCC (ZNY AREA E)

- **Operational Status & Role:** On duty Air Traffic Controller at ZNY during the active handling of and response to the events of September 11, 2001. **Specifically included in the 9/11 Commission Report** (2,977 fatalities).
- **Area E Sector Operations: Worked across all Area E operational sectors** on 9/11—Sectors 66, 87, 88, 89, and 90—managing emergency airspace restructuring, tactical intercepts, and oceanic traffic holds or diversions during the national airspace shutdown.
- **Extended Service:** Remained on duty while most went home to be with their families, providing continuous coverage and extending an **overtime shift to 10 hours** (to divert trans Atlantic flights).

OFFICIAL 9/11 COMMISSION REPORT TRANSCRIPT & AUDIO RECORDS (ZNY RS-66):

- **[0:01 – 0:41] Certification Statement***"This re-recording is being prepared by the New York Air Traffic Control Center. The subject concerns events of September 11, 2001, as*

being pertinent into investigative activities of the 9/11 Commission. The facility involved in this event is the New York Air Traffic Control Center. I hereby certify that the following is a true re-recording of the original recorded transmissions pertaining to the events. My name is Martin Fournier, I am employed as Operations Supervisor at the New York Air Traffic Control Center. This portion of the recording concerns pertinent communications at the RS-66 position between the period 1240 Universal Coordinated Time to 1445 Universal Coordinated Time on September 11, 2001. This re-recording is not a continuous re-recording. The recording for each pertinent portion begins five minutes before and ends five minutes after each pertinent portion."

UNCORRECTED AUDIO TRANSCRIPT (ZNY SECTOR 66 / MANTA) [09:54:48 AM – 09:58:42 AM EDT]

- 54:48 we are heading back to brookhaven
- 55:49 copy
- 56:14 i know
- 56:26 need to talk to you now joe box 39 boston center is abandoning the building
- 57:29 out
- 58:16 all right 66 uh basically just watching ice look man scream really loud and let us know if something comes in and uh the supervisor said to do that you know um i think this guy was the one that was transmitting on guard going going back to brookhaven
- 58:32 there was a plane over here a little bit ago like three thousand feet one of the panthers went that way the plane disappeared other than that um boston evacuated
- 58:42 mcguire is uh accepting aircraft that departed macquarie evacuated boston center yeah

CORRECTED TRANSCRIPT & BREAKDOWN

- **[54:48 – 57:29] Sector Communications & Evacuation Alerts**
    - 54:48: *"We are heading back to Brookhaven."*
    - 55:49: *"Copy."*
    - 56:14: *"I know."*
    - 56:26: *"Need to talk to you now, JOBOC 39. Boston Center is abandoning the building."*
    - 57:29: *"Out."*

- **[58:16 – 58:42] Sector 66 Position Relief Briefing & Traffic Status, Robert S. Totman**
    - 58:16: *"All right 66, basically just watching Islip, man. Scream really loud and let us know if something comes in, and the supervisor said to do that, you know. I think this guy was the one that was transmitting [Mayday! Mayday! Mayday!] on Guard going back to Brookhaven."*

- 58:32: *"There was a plane over here a little bit ago, like 3,000 feet. One of the PANTAs went that way, the plane disappeared. Other than that, Boston evacuated, McGuire is accepting aircraft that departed,"*
- 58:42: *"McGuire,"* (Relieving Controller can be heard inquiring about Boston) *"Evacuated Boston Center, yeah. **Echo Tango**"* (followed by standard audio recording marker beep).

CORRECTIONS TO THE OFFICIAL AUDIO RECORD

1. **Title / File Name Typo:** Recorded as Mantra Sector;
   Correct Aviation Call Sign: **MANTA Sector** (Sector 66).
2. **Timestamp 58:16 ("ice" vs. "Islip"):** Transcribed as *"...watching ice look man..."*;
   Correction: *"...watching Islip, man..."* (referring to Islip MacArthur Airport where ZNY is located) because Boston ARTCC was evacuated.
3. **Timestamp 58:16 (Guard Emergency Transmission Clarity):** Transcribed as *"...transmitting on guard going going back to brookhaven"*;
   Correction: *"...this guy was the one that was transmitting [Mayday! Mayday! Mayday!] on Guard going back to Brookhaven."*
4. **Timestamp 58:32 ("panthers" vs. "PANTA"):** Transcribed as *"...one of the panthers went that way..."*;
   Correction: *"...one of the PANTAs went that way..."* (referring to the **Combat Air Patrol F-16 call sign PANTA** operating in the coastal offshore sector) to aggressively interrogate the aircraft that turned back, returning to Brookhaven.
5. **Timestamp 58:42 (Omitted Phrase & Marker):** Immediately following the final *"McGuire,"* the tape records the relieving controller inquiring about Boston Center's status in the background and *"Evacuated Boston Center, yeah. **Echo Tango,**"* then the audio recording marker beep.