

“I Start Dialing”

Interviewee: Frances Fragos Townsend

Interview Date: August 26–27, 2010

Project: George W. Bush Oral History

Frances Fragos Townsend, assistant commandant for intelligence for the U.S. Coast Guard under George W. Bush, was on maternity leave on September 11, 2001. She describes how, when the first plane hit New York’s World Trade Center on 9/11, her experience made her think immediately it was a terrorist incident rather than an accident.

Frances Fragos Townsend: Given what I did at OIPR, when the first plane hit, I knew immediately that it was terrorism.

Interviewer: When the first plane hit?

Townsend: Oh, yes.

Interviewer: That’s unusual.

Townsend: If it had been a little plane, it would have bounced off the side of the World Trade Center building. Any commercial pilot of a plane that size would have put the plane down in the Hudson, and done everything to avoid a building. There is no version of this that is explainable by a professionally trained pilot. I immediately handed the baby off to my mother and I start dialing.

End of excerpt.

Interview with Frances Fragos Townsend, August 26–27, 2010, George W. Bush Oral History Project, Presidential Oral History Program, Miller Center of Public Affairs, University of Virginia. URL: <https://millercenter.org/the-presidency/presidential-oral-histories/frances-townsend-oral-history>