

Hijackers flew jets, pilot says

Leslie Moriarty / Herald Writer

Tuesday, September 11, 2001 9:00pm | [LOCAL NEWS](#) [LOCAL NEWS](#)

By *Leslie Moriarty*

Herald Writer

SNOHOMISH — Continental Airlines pilot J.C. Cuevas, watching the news of today's terrorist attacks unfold on television at home in Snohomish, said the planes that crashed into the World Trade Center and Pentagon had to have been hijacked.

"There is just no way that any American pilot would have flown into a building," Cuevas said. "No one with any integrity would do that. If it were me, they (terrorists) would have had to kill me first."

Although he said about midday Tuesday that it was much too early to know, the news speculation that terrorists may have killed the pilots and flown the planes into the World Trade Center and the Pentagon themselves fits with what he thinks may have happened.

"There has to be something else involved," he said. "The people (pilots) I know would never do anything like that."

Cuevas awoke Tuesday to his daughter telling him that a kamikaze pilot had crashed an airplane into the World Trade Center.

"I couldn't believe it," Cuevas said. "My mind immediately told me I must not be awake. I was flipping between what she was telling me and the theme in a Tom Clancy book ("Debt of Honor") I recently read where a pilot crashes a 747 into the Capitol building."

As Cuevas began to wake up and realize that the news of the American tragedy was true, he turned to television to hear the latest. When he heard that one of the planes involved in the terrorist acts was based in Newark, N.J., Cuevas was concerned because 80 percent of the flights out of Newark are Continental flights.

Resisting the desire to call and check on fellow pilots and airline employees that he has flown with for 25 years, Cuevas instead watched the news unfold.

As a former pilot of Boeing 757s and 767s, Cuevas confirmed that pilots have a way of communicating that the planes are being hijacked without verbally saying so to air control tower officials.

Cuevas, who flies international Boeing 777 flights, is home on vacation. He returned home after a flight to Paris and London three days ago.

When he is between flights, he has apartment accommodations in New York, in a high-rise building that overlooks the World Trade Center.

"When I watch the tapes of the World Trade Center collapsing, it is just unbelievable," he said. "That is one huge building. The devastation must be horrific. The loss of lives will be great."

Cuevas said no one could be prepared for something such as this. However, he has faith in the security in America's airports.

"The system works," he said. "But ultimately, human beings are involved, and there is always a chance that things will happen."

Cuevas believes Tuesday's terrorist attacks will never be dismissed in anyone's mind.

"This is a horrific situation, a horrible tragedy," he said. "It will change our way of life forever."

You can call Herald Writer Leslie Moriarty at 425-339-3436

or send e-mail to moriarty@heraldnet.com.



© 2018, Everett Herald and Sound Publishing, Inc.

[About](#) | [Site Map](#) | [Contests](#) | [Newsletters](#) | [Subscribe](#) | [About Comments](#) | [Privacy Policy](#) | [Terms of Use](#) |

[Contact](#) | [Social Media](#)