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"Parts of the film are an attempt to create a believable truth from what we can't know," Greengrass says.

"Parts of it, of course, are what we absolutely do know. It's a melding of the two. In the air, much can be learned from telephone calls made by passengers - and there were a lot of them - cockpit voice recorders, the Common Strategy For Hijacks (how staff were trained to behave) and information from what happened on the other airplanes.

Then Greengrass simulated what might have happened with his actors, on the plane set in London.

"People talk about actors as if their job is just to make stuff up," he says. "That's not what actors do for a living. Actors are very, very skilled at finding what's believable, finding a way that something must have been."

Through a process of deduction, Greengrass and his actors created their very convincing scenario.

"I can't prove that that's how it happened, but I have absolutely no doubt in my mind that it did happen and I've absolutely no doubt that our account is a much more credible, believable account ... than previously existed," he says.

Greengrass's portrayal of a "collective endeavour" by the passengers did much to allay concerns from their families. But his career shows he is not the kind of filmmaker to pull punches for approval.

"I think creating a believable truth and dispelling the sort of political mythology and the conspiracy theory around 93 is what this film's about, because at its largest level it's trying to do that for 9/11, a highly politicised subject," he says.

"All we tried to do was take a shape of events that we know must have happened and create a believable way that it did. In the end, audiences have got to judge for themselves."