

**Naval Historical Center
Oral Interview Summary Form**

Interviewers:

CAPT Michael McDaniel
CAPT Gary Hall

Interviewer's Organization:

Navy Historical Center
Navy Historical Center

Interviewee:

RADM Darold F. Bigger

Current Address:

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Date of Interview:

06 Dec 01

Place of Interview:

Navy Annex

Number of Cassettes:

One

Security Classification:

Unclassified

Name of Project: Pentagon Terrorist Attack Incident

Subject Terms/Key Words: Pentagon; Terrorist Attack; 11 September 2001; triage; evacuation; lessons learned; Defense Protective Service; FBI; carnage; Navy Command Center; renovation

Abstract of Interview:

Interviewee Information:

Adm Bigger was born in Oregon as one of four children of a religious family. He has a wife and one married daughter. His father was a medic in the Army during WWII. He was drafted in the late 60's, but first went to seminary. He was conflicted about the war since his religious denomination is Seventh Day Adventist which encourages its congregation to be non-combatants. He was a pacifist on campus, but by the time he graduated, the Vietnam War was winding down, and he did not have to join the military. In graduate school, he met a Navy Reserve chaplain who pulled him away from his ardent pacifist stance. He joined the Navy Reserves for a few years, then took some time off, and then in the mid 1980's rejoined the Navy and "really went at it" and has been very active ever since.

Adm Bigger worked for a REDCOM and CINCPACFLT prior to his current duties.

He currently organizes all the Reserve religious programs for the Navy and Marine Corps Reserves. As of 1999, he has been Deputy Chief of Chaplains for Total Force with additional responsibility as Director for Religious Programs for Commander of the Naval Reserve Force and Marine Corps Reserve Force. In the past two years, he has been in uniform between a third and half the time.

In his civilian life, he pastored for 25 years, and he currently teaches religion and social work at Walla Walla College in Washington.

Topics Discussed:

On September 11th, he was in the middle of doing a week of ADT in the Navy Annex. After the second plane hit the WTC, he turned off the TV and prayed with a number of other people in his office. His office is located in the 6th wing of the Navy Annex and does not have windows. He heard a plane fly overhead and heard a boom soon after. He walked over to a nearby office and asked if that was normal. The fire alarms went off in the building, and everyone started to evacuate. As Adm Bigger was leaving the building, his impression was the contrast between uniformed and civilian personnel. The uniformed personnel seemed purposeful while some civilians were very frightened and disoriented. The minute he walked out doors, he saw the smoke from the Pentagon.

Several hundred people from the Navy Annex rushed over to the Pentagon to help. Several Chaplains and medical personnel stayed together, and moved the group's location at least three times, finally setting up under an overpass. About a dozen people were treated soon after the hit, but it became apparent that there were not going to be too many more people. Adm Bigger moved to a location closer to the Pentagon, with a group of about 30 other Chaplains by about 1200. One chaplain each was assigned to a litter group. Adm Bigger was the primary Chaplain in charge of the chaplains for the rest of the day until the Army took over the next day.

Adm Bigger was on the scene until about 3:30 am, then went back to the Navy Annex and returned to the Pentagon later in the morning. It became very clear that it was not going to be a short time rescue but that it was going to take a number of days. The chaplains organized a rotational schedule by military service. The chaplains were stationed at critical points – first with the litter bearers and then mortuary areas. A tent was established for people who needed counseling. There were 30 chaplains in the afternoon of 11 Sep. Cell phones were the primary method of coordination. 6-12 chaplains were available at any one time for the next week.

Lessons learned. This was a very affirming exercise. About 3 years ago, in the Navy, there was training that was conducted over eight geographical locations on critical incident stress debriefing to respond to exactly this type of scenario of mass casualty. That kind of training is really what the chaplain corps is all about, and the chaplains responded well.

Dealing with the stress and aftermath continued over the next several weeks. The chaplains were involved in the SPRINT and critical incident stress debriefing (CISD) teams. They also did a lot of "office space to office space" visitation. At the family assistance center, there were chaplains there and for the CACO organization, there was a chaplain attached to every Navy person who died in the attack. In less than 24 hours (by Wednesday morning), there were reservists functioning in the Pentagon in response to the Pentagon attack. Between NYC and Washington DC, there were about 30 reserve chaplains and RP's mobilized and about 100 chaplains and RP's all together were involved. There are about 235 reserve billets for chaplains and an additional 160 in the VTU. Two chaplains were on the USNS Comfort during its visit to NYC.

Impact of the 11 Sep events was significant. This is a stunningly wonderful illustration of why we dare not get rid of the Navy. No matter how many allies we have in the world, we never could do this without the support the Navy ships are providing. From the Navy's point of view, there are already chaplains and RP's attached to the ships. About 10 chaplains and 20 RP's have been recalled. Over half of the RP's are in force protection billets. Although about two thirds of the chaplain billets are with the Marines, the Marines have mobilized comparatively few.

Impact of the Reserves in the future is undetermined but he does not anticipate a significant change. At this stage, the Navy has been too busy so far to figure out what to do when the current recalled reserve orders end. Most mobilizations have been individual and not by unit. This is an adjustment.

The impact of this attack on the country has been significant. In the Navy, there are 3 Muslim chaplains. So far, they have not been at all hesitant about participating in the war on terrorism. There ought not be any qualms from Muslim service members about participating in this war on terrorism. That dynamic, and the strong unity of different religions, has been compelling – surpassing even the Gulf War. Adm Bigger’s senses more of a concern about the “rabid revenge” for the acts of terror rather than the contrast. So far, the country has done well and has articulated its position so far and has created clear parameters. It is important to hang on to the notion of a “just war.”

Personally, philosophically, and historically, this is a significant time. We think about life in a much more profound way. The stronger this feeling is, the closer we are to reality. Reality doesn’t stop when life stops. For all of us, these events push our discussion to this level, and this is a good thing. It has made religion more relevant, even to nonreligious people.

Many chaplains that the Admiral has met since the attack have said that this event and the aftermath is what they have trained their life to do. Adm Bigger felt that way during the 24 hours after the attack. When he joined the Navy, his rationale was that if the world were to disintegrate, he wanted to be close to the epicenter and the people near the center of the crisis - those people who are closest to their vulnerability and in harms way. They face this reality in a much more poignant way. Now that American’s sense of invulnerability, peace and safety has been threatened, this is even more wide spread.

During the events of 11 Sep, the Chaplain heard many people wonder if this event was the end of the world. In the Chaplain’s point of view, it would not matter to him. If that was the last day in his life, this would be where he would have wanted to be. He has heard this from Reservists quite often recently. It is the purpose of the Reserves.

ADM Bigger made a CACO call with a CACO team to one of the families who lost a daughter from the Naval Command Center. The family was originally angry at God and was reluctant to meet with the CACO team. However, everyone on the CACO team had experienced recent tragedy as well and they helped break down the anger and hurt. The Admiral’s second daughter was murdered in Wash DC 5 years ago. The Chief on the CACO team had a mother and mother in law who had died in the last year. The naval officer had come back from overseas having lost fellow officers. All the sharing of suffering was very affirming and connected the family with the CACO team that will now last a lifetime. The name of the deceased was Jamie Fallon.

It’s a key time in history. There are some interesting small stories that the Admiral wanted to briefly articulate about his experience of Sep 11:

The first afternoon at the Pentagon, there was a Warrant Officer, a tall slender man in civilian clothes. He was giving out water, soda, and food. He said that he usually worked in the Pentagon, but was working in Rosslyn that day. As soon as he heard about the Pentagon, he drove right to the scene. He pointed to the hole in the Pentagon and said “my wife works right

there in the second deck in the Command Center. I've decided that this was the best place he could be."

A couple of days later, a man in civilian clothes was leaning up against a fence. He was a USMC Reservist. His brother was a Naval reservist on his 2 weeks of AT in the Command Center. He said "I just want to stand guard here for my brother."

He later went to NYC to encourage and touch base with the Coast Guard chaplains. WTC was devastating and overwhelming. The scene was much worse than the Pentagon.

Coast Guard Reserve chaplains contributed significantly to the recovery effort. Whenever parts of a person were recovered, everyone at the scene would stop out of respect and stand quietly while the piece of a person was prayed over by a chaplain and finally removed.

The memorial at Yankee stadium was especially touching. This was not one disaster, this was 6000 disasters. Hearing that, and then standing at the wall of prayer personalized that. It was overwhelming.

Earlier that day, the Admiral was with Commandant of the USCG and Transportation Secretary Manetta.

Even though it's a painful time, it's a good time to be doing what the Chaplains are doing.

What does it mean for the future? Adm thinks that long term there is a need to articulate a wider view of what people need to be thinking about. The stress level may remain high for a long time. A constant state of anxiety is unhealthy - mentally, physically, and emotionally. People need to reach out spiritually as a way to face anxiety with a sense of calm.

Need to be so spiritually ready so you don't live in a state of panic all the time. We need a sense of peace in the face of anxiety. It's easy for us to run away from the pain in our lives. It is better to face them and let go rather than build a wall around our hearts.

Abstracted by:
CDR Richard Fahy
10 DEC 01

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Topics Discussed:

Q. (11:22) Let's talk about 11 September, time leading up to that. Were you here in Washington at the time?

A. I was in the Navy Annex at that time, in fact I'd come soon after Labor Day to do about a week of ADT here in the office, and was suppose to fly home on September 12th to get ready for school to start in the fall.

Q. (11:43) Wow. What were you doing on ADT? Were you, was it a certain project?

A. Administrative stuff. Catching up on office work and working on some policies that we were developing. So it was routine supervisory things here in the office. Earlier in the summer I had made site visits in UCOM (phonetic) and had been out in the field more, and now needed to catch up on office work, so that's what I was about.

Q. (12:07) Tell us about that day. Your recollection.

A. Well, fairly early that morning someone came from the Chief of Chaplain's office. He was out of town, but someone came saying they had turned the television set on and were watching the Trade Tower scenario in New York City. So we gathered in that office and were standing there when the second tower was attacked.

Q. (12:34) So you saw –

A. Saw that happen live.

Q. (12:35) What'd you think?

A. Oh, it was just devastating, because before that I think, at least I was sort of mentally assuming and hoping that this was some kind of a horrible accident. A freak, never to be –

Q. (12:49) This was the first one?

A. Sure, but when the second one happened, we knew immediately that this was something much more than that. The deputy Chief of Chaplains was there and shortly after that second plane hit the second tower, he turned off the television set and those of us in the room prayed together, about those who were suffering under the impact of that. (he becomes emotional) It all comes rushing back, and then we stood around and listened and talked a bit and then went back to work, assumed it was over.

My office is down in the sixth wing a bit away from where the Chief's office (Editors Note: Chief of Chaplains office) was. I don't have any outside windows, and a few minutes later heard an airplane fly—it sounded like very close over the building, and I went out to the next office where my chief is and asked if they often had airplanes—and there was a boom soon after the plane went by. —asked if they often had planes flying that close to the building that were breaking the sound barrier that near by.

And he said, “Oh, I don't think it was that. I think it was probably a dumpster that was dropped off in the parking lot.”

And a very few minutes later, of course the fire alarms went off here in the building and we started evacuating then out the hallway.

One of my impressions on the way out of the building was what seemed to me to be a contrast between uniformed and civilian personnel in our wing. The uniformed people seemed much

more purposeful and focused. Doing what they knew they needed to do, and there were at least several among the civilians who were already significantly disoriented, and needed to be told which direction to go. A couple of them were yelling and screaming on the way out. Very frightened.

We gathered in the parking lot. Tried to get our department together, make sure everybody was there. The minute we walked outdoors, of course, we could see the Pentagon, the smoke coming up from down there and heard very shortly later –

Q. (15:26) Did you realize that's what happened before you -?

A. Not before we went outside, I didn't know. Even when we first got outside, we saw smoke down there, and it wasn't until it was reported to me, that I connected the airplane and the smoke. And even when we did get down there, we couldn't see anything of the airplane. You wouldn't know it was an airplane if you hadn't been told, because there was just none of it left.

Q. (15:51) But there was someone passing on that it had been -?

A. Oh, yes, there were hundreds of people out here in the parking lot across the street.

Q. (15:56) Right.

A. And those who were able to get on a cell phone made it and were hearing reports that way. There may have been some radio contact, I don't know about that, but I was dependent on word-of-mouth stuff. And after we were out there and accounted for everybody in our group, the word was passed verbally among those people that they were asking for volunteers to help down at the Pentagon. So I would guess several hundred of us, literally took off running down across the

parking lot and freeways, which were already blocked off by then and several of us Chaplains gathered together with a group of medical people who were assembling aid stations outside the perimeter of the Pentagon, on this side of the Pentagon.

The group that I joined, moved its location three different times within, I'm guessing about times now, I didn't watch the clock for about twenty hours after that. Probably within the first hour we moved three different times. Ended up setting up under one of the overpasses near there. But there were maybe a dozen people who came out injured who were treated in the area where I was, and it became apparent before long that there wasn't going to be much more going on. So a few of us went down closer to the perimeter of the Pentagon where emergency personnel were gathering waiting to go into the building. A group of Chaplains had gathered there. Some more of us joined them and by—must have been close to noon by then, by then there were thirty of us Chaplains from all the services on this side of the Pentagon. We found out later that there was a whole another group of them on the other side who had been inside the Pentagon at the time, and had evacuated out the far side.

But we were on the side where the attack took place and began organizing ourselves to assign one Chaplain to each of the group of litter bearers who were preparing to go into the building. Emergency service personnel got us all together then early part of the afternoon and since I was the senior person present, asked me to coordinate the Chaplains and be the liaison with them for a while. So until the Army actually assumed control the next morning, I help to organize what took place with the Chaplains the rest of that day.

Q. (18:46) And that was, can you tell us a little bit about what they meant?

A. Uh huh, It was continually changing and moving. That was one thing that surprised me. How often instructions and assumptions and people who said they were in control rotated. There were food fights over the next several days between federal agencies as to who was really in charge, and who was going to do what, and which stipulations were in place. What that meant to us is, that we set up a rotating schedule. It became very clear that this was not going to be a short-term rescue operation. It was going to take a period of days and we set up a rotating schedule for that first twenty-four hour period among the services, so that one service at a time would have a several hour block that they would be responsible for coordinating Chaplain ministry in the immediate area in which we were working. And that continued through the night. I was down there until about, I guess it must have been three-thirty or four in the morning and then came back up in to the office at the annex for an hour or so and then went back down in the morning again.

We stationed Chaplains so that they would be at critical points, places initially with those litter bearers that we thought would be going into the building. Then as the emergency personnel started to set up mortuaries where they would bring remains out, we had Chaplains assigned to those locations. I had Chaplains that were responsible for each of the major agencies that was there, that were there. That's pretty much what we did during that first night. Established a tent, a location so that people who sought Chaplains would find that place.

Q. (20:44) How many did you have?

A. How many Chaplains?

Q. (20:46) Yes.

A. Well, there were thirty of them there in the afternoon. Physically there, and once we set up the rotating schedule each of those component people coordinating a group from their service to carry on those, that were there.

And the numbers of people who were involved during each shift, you'd get better figures for that from a couple of these other people that kept records of it. Did I, I didn't give you those names before, did I?

Paul Steele is the Reserve Chaplain who coordinated the Navy people who were working down there. You want phone numbers and all that now or later?

Q. (21:31) I can get that from you later.

A. OK. And the Army person who did much of that coordinating was a Chaplain whose last name is Racster, R-a-c-s-t-e-r, a Colonel, and I'm drawing a blank on the Air Force guy. I stayed in touch primarily through cell phones with the Chief of Chaplains of each services office and those people I know have done some writing about and record keeping, so some data ought to be available from them.

But I know that we had anywhere from a half a dozen to a dozen people down there just on this side of the Pentagon all night long for, in fact for over a week 24 hours a day, they were there.

Q. (22:32) What kind of training do you all do to prepare for something like this and are there any lessons learned, God forbid something like this happen again, but –

A. Sure, other things we wish we had done differently to prepare?

Q. Yes sir.

A. The truth of the matter was that this was a very affirming exercise. About three years ago in the Navy our training which takes place in about seven or eight sites around the world and includes all active duty, and reservists are able to go if they wish as well. Our training was on critical incident stress debriefing, which was to prepare for just this kind of emergency.

Q. (23:13) What drove that? What drove that emphasis to know?

A. That training at that time?

Q. (23:19) To know the Army was doing it, it was all just Armed Services or was it just Navy. I know the chap—the Army was doing the same thing about that time.

A. You know I was not in Washington and knew very few people at Washington at the time, and I'm not sure what drove it. I know that we were involved in the airplane crash in New York and in California. Our Coast Guard Chaplains particularly were actively engaged in those things, and that certainly reinforced the importance of that. But that kind of preparedness is part of what Chaplains are all about.

Q. (23:49) Right.

A. We are trained from seminary on to deal with people who are in crises. Central part of work for us is to deal with people at pivotal times in their lives. Either celebrative ones or grieving ones. So births and deaths are familiar for us. So three years ago that was an important part of training for us.

And then the whole notion of responding to emergencies is just part of what we do. On ships for example, the battle station for a Chaplain on a ship is at medical stations. So we are where people

are most seriously injured. So that's what we're used to doing. I heard one Chaplain remark, this week, as they were describing their perception of what happened at the Pentagon, that while other people were running away to get to safety, the Chaplains instinctively were running toward the center of where the disaster had taken place. And I think with medical people and other emergency response people, too, that is the case. That's just part of who we are and what we're trying to do. So it was an affirming exercise.

That continued, that kind of emphasis on dealing with the stress and the aftermath it creates, continued over the next several weeks with Chaplain participation in the teams that did debriefing of people who were feeling some level of stress. They worked here in this building in the Annex. Our Navy Chaplains were attached to them.

Q. (25:36) Was that the SPRINT Team?

A. Uh huh, uh huh. And in the Pentagon Chaplains were involved in the, SPRINT is one thing that's called, sometimes they're called CISD teams, Critical Incident Stress Debriefing Teams, or CISM, Critical Incident Stress Management. I think that's what the Air Force calls it. Similar kind of thing. A conglomeration of professional people, primarily mental health professional people to deal with the trauma this creates in people's lives.

So we were engaged in that. We did a lot of office space to office space visitation in the next several weeks. We had Chaplains circulating in this building and the other services had them elsewhere as well.

At the Family Assistance Center, there were Chaplains all the time down there, and we had our Navy personnel rotating through that, through that hoop as well. The CACO, Casualty Assistance Calls Organization had a Chaplain attached to every Naval person who died in the

attack and that Chaplain was involved in visits with that family, in anticipation of the funeral and at the funeral itself.

Q. (26:56) Did you get involved in the coordination of that or how would that all –

A. That, that is always coordinated by Naval District, Washington, and we have a fulltime staff over there who does that.

Q (27:09) I (Unintelligible 27:09)

A. Did you?

Q. (27:08) But, I was just wondering –

A. (Unintelligible 27:11)

Q. (27:13) We went down to the casualty side of the Chaplains. Now OA, you're talking about just the Chaplains, they kind of did it on their own. I see, I see.

A. Well no, they're part of the Naval District, Washington Casualty Team.

Q. (27:26) Oh the Casualty Team. Oh really, Oh, OK. We met the Regional Casualty Coordinator.

A. A civilian?

Q. (27:33) Yes.

A. Uh huh. Yeah, yeah.

Q. Are they mainly -

A. So there's a Chaplain in that unit.

Q. (27:40) Ok and are they just pulled from the region?

A. No, we had a number of reservists, who agreed, who came for that activity. We had, in less than twenty-four hours we had reservists here. That is to say before sun-up on Wednesday morning there were reservists in this building and functioning at the Pentagon.

Q. (28:04) Wow.

A. And of course there were active duty people here from the moment it happened.

Q. (28:10) Now did you get involved with the coordination of that or was that all through –

A. The CACO stuff you mean?

Q. (28:14) Well just the, getting the Chaplains here.

A. No, while I was at the Pentagon during that first twenty-four hours, the office staff up here at the Annex was doing that coordination. So by the time I got back, when the Army took over down there and I got back during the second day, they had their group functioning and doing well, and Paul Steel from Philadelphia was here, and he was the action officer on the reserve component of all of that.

Q. (28:44) Wow.

A. We had, we had about thirty, between here and New York we had about thirty Chaplains and RPs, mobilized in the aftermath of September 11th.

Q. (28:54) Thirty?

A. Thirty.

Q. Wow.

A. Uh huh, and about a hundred Chaplains and RPs all together, active duty and reserve were involved in coping with the aftermath of the attack.

Q. (29:087) What kind of reserve pool do you have. I mean -

A. How many of them are there?

Q. (29:10) Yes, Sir.

A. We have about two hundred and thirty-five billets and about another hundred and sixty Chaplains in addition to that. So we've got close to four hundred Reserve Chaplains.

Q. (29:24) The additional ones are what? VTU types? (Editors Note: VTU - Volunteer Training Unit)

A. Yes, VTUs. We have a lot of Chaplains in the VTU in the Navy. It's not true in the Army and the Air Force. But our Navy Chaplains love what they do so much –

Q. (29:38) Wow!

A. That they will volunteer to do it, rather than miss out. Yes.

Q. (29:43) Interesting.

A. Yes.

Q. (29:43) Why?

A. Why us rather than another service, or why military rather than nothing?

Q. (29:50) Why us than other services? Why the Navy?

A. We've tried to think that, to figure that out and there haven't been any statistical studies, any really valid studies done about it, but our impression is that it has to do with the variety of opportunities that we have in the Navy. In the Reserve Chaplain Corps about almost two-thirds of our billets are with Marines. A third of them with the Navy. Some of those are operational. Some of them are base naval station located. We have a number of Coast Guard assignments and several MSC billets as well. So the variety, it looks like to us, and sounds like from what we hear. The variety is what entices them. There's also a different kind of organization in the Navy, both active duty and reserve than there is in some of the other services.

In the other places, to be a Chaplain in the Air Force, for example, feels very much like being a pastor or a rabbi or a priest in civilian life. You're just wearing a uniform. Your congregation is at the chapel. This is the group you work with, and when they go to work they all go home at night.

In the Navy it is an entirely different kind of an adventure, because we're attached to units, and we, we work with those units day in and day out all week long, not just when they show up for worship services. So the unit identification thing is a major attraction as well.

Q. (31:26) Were there Chaplains that deployed on *Comfort*?

A. There were two who were on board, uh huh.

Q. (31:35) Are they part of the normal contingent? I mean are they kind of part of the augment force, that when *Comfort* does it's thing they go with the -?

A. That's right, they're part of the augmentees, yes, but since *Comfort* for example is an NSPS ship, now, they don't have someone permanently assigned to her.

Q. (31:50) Right.

A. But they pull them in from, from Bethesda whenever she deploys, and then they, if it were for any extended period of time, they would back fill those with reserves. Bethesda billets with reserves, exactly.

Q. (32:09) Let me shift for a minute if we can to the Navy's role in the war on terrorism. Where do you see it going? What are some of the lessons learned from this as well, maybe preparing for other contingencies or other situations? Just give me some of the thoughts from the head senior Chaplain Corps.

A. Well, from the big Navy's perspective, if I had a star on both collars instead of just on one, I would say, this is a stunningly wonderful illustration of why we dare not get rid of the Navy. No

matter how many allies you have all around the world, you would die over there right now, if you didn't have the ships you have in the Gulf and in the Med from which the very kind of strikes that we need now can be launched. The moveable platforms that we have in the Navy are just an essential components of our participation in the world affairs.

From a Chaplains point of view, our personnel are already there. Navy Chaplains and RPs are on-sight because the ships are there and our people are attached to those ships. We know our people, because we've worked with them for months now. Whereas, and we see that as an advantage over what some other services do by rotating personnel so frequently, that it becomes a cookie cutter approach rather than an interpersonal one. So we think there are some significant advantages to that.

We've had several Chaplains recalled now, about well, it's been, it's been almost a week since I've looked at the list. At that time we had ten Chaplains and about twice that many RPs recalled. The Chaplains were recalled to ministry assignments, of course. Over half of our RPs have been recalled to force protection, because all of our religious program specialists are weapons trained, since we Chaplains are not combatants, these people function as out bodyguards when we're in operations and I want to see what kind of ribbons they have on their chest before I dawn a Marine uniform and take off out through the desert, but.

Q. (34:32) (chuckles) Ah, interesting.

A. Yes, so a number of them were recalled to force protection, but that's about the extent of our direct involvement from the reserve side of the house now, in the present activity. As time goes on that may shift and change, you know. It continues to grow and change as we move. I mentioned to you that almost two-thirds of our reserve billets are with Marines, and thus far the

Marines have mobilized comparatively few related to the other services, but at least we begin to see now some more active involvement from the Marine Corps and that will – would as that begins to happen that will call on more response from our community as well.

Q. (35:26) Have there been discussions on how this may impact the reserves more long term, either in numbers or how we would use the Chaplain Corps in the future?

A. Nothing really significant, I don't think at this point. My impression is that getting done what we've done so far with the mobilization has occupied so much of people's time that they're just now beginning to look at the second stage of things. For example in the mobilization cell, you guys know this as well as I, but in the mobilization cell now they're beginning to look at what we do when these people's orders run out. Do we renew them for a second year? Do we rotate new people into these assignments? But they're still not looking at after this war on terrorism is over, what lessons have we learned for future issues.

I think we, one of the wonderful aspects of the American military is our ability to adjust and that—I remember (chuckles) seeing a poster years ago in an Air Force base. It supposedly was a quote from some Russians. This was during the Cold War, some Russian training manual, who said, “We have training manuals from the Germans, and the British and the Americans. We know what the British are going to do. We know what the Germans are going to do, but in spite of the fact that we have the American's training manuals, we don't know what they're going to do, because they don't follow them.”

(everyone chuckles)

We saw illustration of that in our PERSMOB Team stand ups in several parts of the country. We had heard that they were going to de-establish all the PERSMOB Teams and that meant billets

going away for us, and in fact we had several of our Chaplain billets on a few of those teams that were still there.

Q. (37:32) Are there two billets in each PERSMOB Team for Chaplain?

A. I think there's only one.

Q. (37:37) Oh really?

A. Yes. Now you may know more about it than I.

Q. (37:39) Well I was in a PERSMOB Team back in –

A. And you had two of them?

Q. We had two Chaplains, yes Sir.

A. Oh, well the only one I've worked directly with was in REDCOM 22 and we only had one Chaplain assigned to the PERSMOB Team there. But because everybody was saying these are RX (phonetic) billets, they're going to go away, we have quit filling some of them, and now as they're standing these things up, I just had Admiral Totushek tell me the other day, "Don't take anymore Chaplains out of PERSMOB Teams, these people are proving their value and we need them there."

Q. (38:15) Well, I was just down in Norfolk earlier this week and you know during the recall process Norfolk, of course, is a big site, there is a special case report, and of course, the Chaplain needs to participate in that special case report and they, well I was told they don't have a

PERSMOK (phonetic) to mobilize down there to support them so they're having to, you know do –

A. Ahhh.

Q. Get their Chaplains through rescheduled drills or, you know, IDTT. However they can which certainly puts a new factor in the equation for how and when you can conduct this special case report.

A. You bet, interesting. Hummmm. Very interesting.

Q. (38:58) (chuckle)

A. Yes, well that just points out to me that we're relearning things that we thought we knew once and then decided no, this isn't going to be important anymore. The other thing we're seeing is that most of the mobilizations that have taken place thus far are individual rather than by units. And we were so sure after the Gulf War that we were not going to do any piecemeal stuff again, and it was going to be unit by unit we were going to mobilize. Shhhft (makes a sound), out the window again. And we are adjusting to that, but we're, as a Chaplain Corps I think we've been able to cope with that so far.

Q. (39:36) Can you tell us a little bit about the type of training that you conduct with your Chaplains on a regular basis? I know you, I believe you have like I don't know whether you call them seminars, or conferences that I believe they have to attend each year and the kind of thing you talk about at that conferences and how useful that training plan was in this situation?

A. We tend to rotate, of course, schedules and what's included in some of that training. This year for the first time we're bringing all of our Chaplains and RPs together at the same time and in the same place.

Q. (40:18) Really?

A. Before that we've broken them into smaller groups. All of the Marine assets have got together for a number of years now, but the blue side has not done that. And this year our focus is going to be on family readiness and particularly a certified course in Marriage and Family Relationships will be part of that training. We're going to look at MOOTW - Military Operations Other Than War and how we as Chaplains and our support people can be useful and cooperative in those kinds of ventures. And then most of the rest of it has to do with things that would be applicable to any kind of naval reservist. How the organization is functioning. What you need to do to be personally ready to go if the call comes to you, the individual readiness stuff. The career path kinds of things, with fitness reports and watching your records and that sort of thing. The religious training is done by individual denominations or faith groups. So when we get our Chaplains together, we don't need to teach them how to preach or what they ought to do about baptizing people. All of those are faith group oriented and their own denomination is responsible for that, and even when they are Chaplains, they function as a representative of their faith within the environment of the Chaplain Corps. So if an individual family or a community of people needs a particular kind of service that a given Chaplain doesn't provide out of her or his faith background, then that Chaplain's task is to get a Chaplain or contract with somebody to satisfy that need.

So for example, as a Christian, if I had a group of Jews who were getting ready to have Passover or Yon Kippur, my task would be to be certain that through the regular naval supply system we had the sort of food, and ceremonial supplies that they needed for that activity. If there were a group of Catholics and I'm a Protestant, if there were a group of Catholics there and we didn't have a priest available, it's my challenge to get a priest there, to have mass periodically for them. So we facilitate for those that we don't serve directly. And all that spiritual stuff's taken care of by denomination. So our training is focused on how to apply that religious background in a military setting.

Q. (43:03) Do you see yourselves working more closely with the SPRINT Team, or what is your involvement with them? We've heard a lot of, in the aftermath of and interviewing folks with the Pentagon a lot of positive things about the SPRINT Team. I believe you have worked closely with them, but maybe you can tell us just a little bit about the problem.

A. Well, we do have people who are tapped by those teams when they are stood up. So that we, we are participants in that kind of exercise. To tell you the truth I only talked with the SPRINT Team leader here very briefly at the Annex and the Air Force person that was coordinating the Pentagon group briefed me one time, and everything I heard about our cooperation, both from our side and theirs was very positive. So if there are things we need to work on and fix, I'd be happy to hear it from any of you. But I didn't stumble into that.

Q. (44:09) No, I heard good things, too.

A. Yes, I thought it went very well, yes, and again that's stuff that comes pretty naturally for us Chaplains and we're ready to do that sort of thing.

Q. (44:24) Change this real quick (referring to transcription tape) before we go to the next questions.

A. Something that occurs to me and that is the impact of this particular attack on the sentiment of the country and particularly those religious leaders in the country. It's something that we as Chaplains pay some significant attention to. I mean when you compare this with Vietnam, for example, this is worlds apart. We have in the Navy three Muslim Chaplains now, and a significant number of Muslim servicemen. I have yet to find any of them who feel at all hesitant about participating in the war on terrorism, even though they are Muslim.

The Armed Forces Chaplain's Board which is the group of Chief Chaplains who get together to coordinate Chaplain work in all the services, help facilitate a request from and received from one of the major Muslim leaders in this country a, in the Muslim world they call it a Fhatwa (phonetic) which is essentially a declaration of, from very high clerical scholars in order to clarify for Muslim believers what their attitude ought to be if they were participants in the military. How do you relate to this? Do you go fight your Muslims brothers in Afghanistan? And that statement which came from some leading Muslim clerics in this country was very clear that Islam is against the notion of and the expression of this kind of terrorism so that there ought not to be any qualms on the part of our service members about participating in the war on terrorism. That dynamic as well as the sense of very strong unity among other religious persons in this country is a different kind of issue, I think than what we have faced in the more recent battles. Even in the Gulf there were numbers of people who were uneasy and certainly didn't want to pursue it to the extent that they are willing to now.

I tend to be one of those people who wants to find the center of the pendulum swing and when it goes way wide in either direction, my sensitivities are acute. I'd be more concerned in this case about things going too far toward the rabid revenge side than toward people not being willing to respond at all.

I think we've done quite well as a country to think clearly and to articulate our reasons for doing what were doing. To place some logical limits on the kinds of attacks that we create. Those were illustrated to me by some of what the Israelis have done shortly after their suicide bombers on Saturday. That their targets were intentionally military ones. They weren't just tit for tat responses. I think that kind of thing is important to people who have religious moral underpinnings. That to hang onto a notion of a just war rather than just to fight for survival or an intention to dominate, I think that's important for us and part of what, of what we as a Chaplain Corps bring to the discussion is reminders which all believers of all faiths carry with them, but we're a walking reminder of that kind of moral side to our discussions and policy planning target identifications.

Q. (48:40) This is more on the personal side and you talked about if you had a star on each one of your collars, and you have access, since you have a cross on one, you have a higher access, spiritually as a nation, being a Christian, where do you see it going from here? I mean it's kind of a philosophical kind of question, but I think I'd be interested in someone in your capacity and where we are in this time in history, obviously a very pivotal time in history?

A. Several very good things happen at times of crisis like this. A major one of those is that all of us tend to think about life in much more profound terms than we do in happier more carefree moments. And the truth is, the more profound we get about anticipating the meaning of life today

and where life is heading in the future, the closer we are to reality. Because those of us who are people of faith, believe that reality doesn't stop when life stops. And different faith groups have different ways of expressing that and describing it, but for all of us, these kind of events push us to those thoughts and discussions. That's a good thing. It makes, it makes Chaplains and you would expect me to say this, it makes Chaplaincy even more central to what's happening in the military and in the world right now.

People who are not religious at all are open to and anxious to explore those kinds of ultimate questions. And even if they aren't interested in talking about it in religious terms, Chaplains can be helpful in that process.

I've heard a number of Chaplains, both during the immediate physical crisis after the attack and since then talk about how it seems to them that this is what they have trained their life to do. That this is the moment for them.

I felt like that in the twenty-four hours after that attack. I, when I was making the decision in the late 70s to join the reserves, one of the things that led me to that was a recognition that if I were around when the world would disintegrate, I can't think of a place I would rather be than with those people who were closest to the center of that crisis. I wanted to be with those people who sense the danger most eminently. Who were most aware of their vulnerability. That's where I wanted to be and that seems to me to be where military people are at this juncture. They are in harms way, as we've said for decades. So they face those questions much more pointedly than the rest of them.

The differences in this attack from wars in the past are that the symbol of our invulnerability was the very thing that was attacked so now every American's sense of peace and safety is shattered. So we're useful wherever we are at this juncture in ways that was not always true before.

Is that getting after what you were asking? I had several people, as we were waiting out in the parking lot on the 11th of September and on the way down to the Pentagon and after we got there, I had several people say, “I wonder if this is the end of the world?” I didn’t say so, out loud to them, because I thought maybe it would be a bit insensitive, but the truth is it wouldn’t have mattered to me. If this is the last day of life on the earth, this is what I want to be doing, so what difference does it make whether this is the end or not. This is where I feel like God wants me to be.

Q. (53:17) A good place to be.

A. Uh huh, and don’t you all feel that? I hear it from reservists other than just Chaplains, that to be involved in this activity is what we wear a uniform a few times a month, several times a year for.

Q. (53:34) Absolutely, yes. Wow, anything you’d like to add, addition for the historical record?

Q. (another) Where do you go from here?

A. I go back home Tuesday, actually to teach. Back in the classroom in January.

Q. (53:57) I would sure love to be a part of that class.

A. Yes, I would too. (chuckle) I know that last year I took a sabbatical last fall and the *Cole* was attacked, of course, in October while we were here last year. I had some people tell me, no more for you, every time you’re in Washington something like this happens. Maybe Washington won’t want me back anymore. (chuckle) I might be the missing link here.

But it did absolutely change the complexion of every class I taught during the following quarter, because the thing that was on the student's minds was different than it had been before. I think with the *Cole* what shocked a lot of these young kids, both here in DC that I worked with while I was here and even when I got back home, was this wasn't some far off place, people who looked different from us, lived different from us. These were our peers who came home in body bags and boxes. And that started to sober them up. I can't imagine what it will be like when I get back there this year.

So illustrations were much more prevalent. There was a profundity to their interest in life and the issues of life that just hadn't been there before. So it would be interesting. And as you know, they've got us all on short leashes now, so if anything blows up, we can all be here on very short notice.

Q. (55:38) Do you have a family?

A. I have a wife who lives with me at home. One married daughter who lives in Southern California.

Q. (55:46) Any grandchildren.

A. None. They've been married this couple about four years now. We hope and dream toward that. The, another component of this whole evolution for us is that we had a second daughter who five years ago this summer was murdered here in Washington, D.C.

Q. (56:12) Oh no!

A. It was a very traumatic experience for us. It was our first real taste of trauma. So my selection to a job in this city was important for me and for us as a family, because it brought me back to this place repeatedly, and helped me sort some of that out. It also set us up, I think, to be especially aware of what some of the families, last year, who lost sons and daughters on the *Cole* were going through. I know that was significant for some of them.

Q. (57:03) Wow.

A. And the family that I was attached to as a Chaplain this year, when we first went to see them, they had a daughter who was a single mother who worked in the Navy Command Center in the Pentagon. When I went with the CACO team to see them, they had told us before we went that they didn't want us to come. But, as you guys probably know when the transition came from being missing status to—no from unaccounted for to missing status, the CNO said, everyone of these people, everyone of their families will now be contacted personally.

When we went to their house, I got out of the van and one woman met us in the driveway. Found out later she was an aunt, saying, "I don't know if the family is going to talk to you at all. They did not want to see you," and then she saw my cross and looked at me and pointed her finger in my face and said, "I blame God for this, and I don't want to talk to you!"

So we had a very interesting visit at that home for the next hour and a half. For this family to find out that the Navy Chief who was with us, had a mother and a mother-in-law both die in the last year. The naval officer who was with us had come back from overseas with more than one of his colleagues who had been killed in airplane crashes, and I shared a little of our story. It just melted these people and they knew that we were not there making some kind of cold

pronouncement about which we knew nothing. And it has connected us with that family in such a way that that bond will last for a lifetime for us.

Q. (59:11) What family was it?

A. Fallon, Jamie Fallon's parents. (Editors Note: SK3 Fallon). Her dad's a retired chief. So all of our sharing of our suffering brings us together.

Q. (59:33) That must have been comforting for you too. I mean why did you get assigned to that one, you know, in that –

Q. (another) Well, it sure brings reality again to Romans 8:28.

A. Oh, yes, you bet, all things work together. In spite of all the bad stuff something goods going to come here. Deployments do that for our active duty friends, don't they? I mean they go away for six months, they come back feeling like they accomplished this together and they feel close to this Navy family. That's part of what the bonding is for all of us, I think.

Q. (01:00) The people we talked to yesterday on *Comfort* said that. They look forward to getting together and getting underway, and the family aspect of it.

A. There are sociological experiments that verify that. Have you heard the old study about the summer camp where they had a group of kids and they wanted to see what would happen with them if they were fighting with one another, and what would they do if they created a crisis? Did you hear about this?

So they created a water crisis and everybody was fighting over who got the showers and who didn't and who got to go swimming and who didn't etc. And they were at odds with each other.

One cabin against another, and then, and then they created something that all of them had to work together to overcome. Major, camp-wide crisis. Solved the other problems immediately. So we see that in this country, I mean, we get so preoccupied with sub-groups squabbling with one another, religious, national, geographical, etc. etc. What do you hear about that now? Absolutely nothing, because a greater purpose unites us.

Q. (01:01:22) It's a key time in history.

A. Uh huh. It really is.

Q. (01:01:27) Anything else you'd like to add for the historical record?

A. I think you've gotten it out of me well. I could tell you individual stories but that would go on for along time.

Q. (01:01:42) Tell us a couple.

A. Yeah, let me tell you a couple, because there are some people that were impressive to me, in this regard. I remember the first afternoon, down at the Pentagon while we were waiting around the perimeter, hoping that the fire could be put out soon enough that we could get in and save some people.

There was a tall slender man in civilian clothes that made sure that all of us military people had all the refreshments that we needed. Water, soda, anything we needed, food. Some of the emergency agencies had brought it and would leave it in big piles and he was passing it out individually up and down the line. During a pause in what he was doing I went over to visit with him. Found out that he was a Warrant Officer who usually worked in the Pentagon, but that day

had been at a meeting in Rosslyn, and he said when he heard about the attack, he came back immediately. He pointed to the hole in the Pentagon and said, "My wife works right there on the second deck, and I've decided this is the best place I can be."

Q. Wow.

A. (01:02:57) And a couple days later when they had a fence erected around that area, a man again in civilian clothes was leaning up against this fence, near where the Chaplain's tent was and I went over and introduced myself and visited with him a little bit. Found out he was a Marine Corps reservist whose brother was a naval reservist. Just came to do two weeks of duty in the Command Center - Elseth (Editors Note: LCDR Robert Elseth) and he said, tears in his eyes, (Chaplain starts to cry) he said, "I just want to stand guard here for my brother."

We went to New York, a couple of us, a Chaplain who was gathering data, don't let me forget that one and I, just to encourage and touch bases with our Coast Guard Chaplains who were working up there, and when we went down to ground zero, I was absolutely overwhelmed. I thought we had a sizeable disaster on our hands here. It was nothing compared to what they were doing.

Q. (01:04:23) Describe it for us.

A. Ohhhh, it was blocks large in the first place, and for some reason I just saw one building at a time drop and figured there would be this heap of building, but to stand there next to a five story high rubble heap, that covered blocks. It was just overwhelming. They had semi-tractor trailers and big cranes pulling beams out of this, the edge of this pile. They lowered, load two or three beams on a trailer and that would be all it could hold. And they'd pull these things out of the pile

and you couldn't see that they did anything. And then they'd drive those off down to the, down to the pier, load them on the ferry, haul them over to Sand Islands and dump them.

When we went to—well let me tell you a later story about that spot. We had some Coast Guard Reserve Chaplains who worked there after we had left, and one of them described in an email to us one day about working up on the stack itself with an emergency person who had a dog looking for remains, and we had watched what they did with remains. Regardless of how small they were, everybody on the whole site would stop working and stand quietly while this piece of a person was prayed over by a Chaplain, brought to the little cart and carried down to the mortuary.

He said that he was up on the stack one day and the dog got very excited. They looked around couldn't find anything, didn't see anything, but just crumbled concrete. They brought in little garden trowels and little buckets and started going through it piece by piece and they found a part of a body. He said it was so small that he could hold it in the palm of his hand, and for that little piece of a human being the whole site came to a stop. Wanted to pay respects to that body. And I was touched, I was there when they had the memorial at Yankee Stadium on Sunday afternoon. One of the things in that service that touched me was the Rabbi who said, and his figures were based on their assumptions at that time, they've been downscaled since, he said, "On that day, six thousand people didn't die. One person died and it happened six thousand times." This was not one disaster. This was six thousand disasters.

Hearing him say that and then standing at the "wall of prayer," have you heard about the wall of prayer in New York where family and friends brought pictures to the people and pasted them on the walls –

Q. (01:07:40) Yes I have, yes sir.

A. For hundred of yards outside Bellevue Hospital, personalized that. So that it didn't become one big rubble heap. This became hundreds and hundreds and hundreds and hundreds, hundreds of people who were sought after by thousands of people that missed them, and those two things made it overwhelming.

Earlier that day I was at the Coast Guard Headquarters when Secretary of Transportation, Secretary Minetta, and the Commandant of the Coast Guard arrived and when the few of us who were there waiting for them greeted them, Secretary Minetta saw the cross on me, again, and paused and stopped and looked at me and said, on behalf of everybody else whom I represented, of course, not because of me, but said, "Thank you so much for what you're doing, for being here. It's so important.

Heard comments like that from several of our Chaplains who went with families back to the site several weeks after the disaster in New York that Mayor Gulianni sought out several of them and told them how grateful he was that they were there.

So even though it's a painful time, it's a good time for us to be doing what we're doing.

Q. (01:09:28) Very pivotal time.

A. Uh huh. What does it mean for the future? We're starting to think long-term about our need to articulate a wider view of what people need to be thinking about. For example, the—we anticipate the stress level to stay high and people (Unintelligible 01:09:55) and you probably hear this from the psychologists and psychiatrists that you do briefing with as well. And to live in a constant state of anxiety is unhealthy, emotionally, mentally and physically unhealthy. I hope, I hope that people in this country will be able to reach out to the spiritual resources that are

available to them if they've not already tapped them, and be able to utilize that as a way of facing anxiety with a sense of calm.

That's one thing I've noticed in the military people, you know, I mentioned on the way out the hallway, they seemed very purposeful and focused. But I think that also comes from their anticipation of these kinds of crises. So that the anxiety doesn't become uncontrollable. It gets focused on a purpose and they know what comes next. That can lead to a sense of false security and I frankly have some anxiety about that for the sake of the country. I very much appreciate some of our leaders continual articulation of the need to look beyond our human resources and to include God in the process of coping with this. What that reminds us is, that we can't take care of this problem ourselves. The minute we think our military or our human wisdom is able to cope with this, we set ourselves up for another trauma, because this is not the end and we cannot solve the problem of terrorists that are determined to attack us. We can't solve that. So what we have to do is learn to live in spite of those things and the best possible way to do that is to be so spiritually ready for whatever the future holds that you don't live to stay in panic from moment to moment. And that's something that we as the Chaplain Corps need to challenge ourselves to help our military people to find. That level of spiritual readiness that gives them a sense of peace in the face of anxiety.

Q. (01:12:25) What an opportunity.

A. Uh huh. Yes.

Q. (01:12:31) Well thank you so much for spending this time with us.

A. You're welcome. I'm glad you're doing what you're doing.

Q. (01:12:39) We feel good about it.

A. It's important.

Q. (01:12:41) What you said really captures, I think the spirit, we've talked amongst ourselves, you know, why this now? Why us? Why – I mean we and certainly we felt that our experience with the Cole which was a new one for both of us, but very rewarding and we felt very good after doing that so it prepared us for this. No accidents there.

A. Did you get acquainted with the Wipperly family when you did the Cole thing? They live out here in Virginia.

Q. (02:13:11) Not the family. We heard the story. The story about him and knew, but not, no.

A. His father has a Purple Heart from Vietnam, which I understand was in the basement and not talked about, and when, after the funeral, I represented the CNO at that funeral.

Q. (01:13:39) Did you, wow.

A. And several days later the Purple Heart for the son came, and we did that presentation in their living room, and this former Marine dad who had a terrible time coping with the loss of his son—I'm going to call him here at the end of this week before I leave again—it's easy for us to run away from the pain in our lives and if we do we just seal off that whole part of life and refuse to let it heal, and I'm hoping that for him and all those others whose families are touched by these kinds of loses, the spiritual resources that are available to us as human beings, I hope it

might be able to help those people face those things and be able to let go of it. Rather than wall
if off and shut it up in a dark corner and hope it never comes out.

Q. (01:14:40) Yes, or build a wall around their hearts to keep out the pain.

A. Yes.

Q. That's what my grandfather used to say, he said one of the most tragic things is wasted pain.

A. Yeah, yeah, that's right.

Transcribed by:
Ethel Geary
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