

**Naval Historical Center
Oral Interview Summary Form**

Interviewers:

Capt Michael McDaniel

Interviewer's Organization:

Naval Historical Center

Interviewee:

Charles C. Briant

Current Address:

██████████
██████████

(w) Navy Criminal Investigation Service
Liaison CNO (N2N)

Date of Interview:

11 APR 02

Place of Interview:

Pentagon

Number of Cassettes:

N/A

Security Classification:

UNCLAS

Name of Project: Pentagon Terrorist Attack Incident

Subject Terms/Key Words: Pentagon; Terrorist Attack; 11 September 2001; Defense Protective Service; FBI; carnage; Navy Command Center; CNO IP; Remains Recovery

Abstract of Interview:

Interviewee Information: Mr. Briant was born in ██████████, NJ in 1952. He grew up in northern New Jersey with 2 sisters and a brother, all older. They moved to Point Pleasant Beach early on and that is where he grew up. When he graduated from high school he went to Jacksonville University on an NROTC scholarship. He majored in Urban Studies. His first ship was the *USS Warden* as a Gunnery Officer. He did a tour with NCIS as an active duty officer in London, England. After this tour he tried to change his designator from 1110 to 1630 but wasn't accepted. Instead he took a job offer with NCIS as a civilian, working in Groton, CT. He joined the Navy Reserve, changed his designator to 1635 and has been a Reserve Intelligence Officer since 1980. After 2 years he was sent back to the NCIS office in London where he worked until 1984. He also worked on NCIS Special Projects, and with the Counter terrorism Division at various locations including Quantico and Panama. He has worked in various NCIS positions in the Washington, D.C. area including Deputy Director of Crimes Against Persons at headquarters. He is currently the NCIS Liaison to the CNO staff where he also provides support to N3/N5. In the Navy Reserve he has been assigned to units in Groton, Ct, a CINCUSNAVEUR unit in London, multiple intelligence jobs in Washington, D.C. including at NAVSEA. He is currently a Deputy Director of Intelligence in the National Military Joint Intelligence Center.

Topics Discussed:

On 11 Sep he was at his normal DNI morning meeting at the CNO-IP area in the Navy Command Center. He is there to provide input from a counterintelligence perspective. After that meeting he went to the N3/N5 meeting. They had just moved that down to the new Command Center. He remembers sitting at the briefing table with the intelligence people to his left with CDR Dan Shanower a few rows behind him. Vince Tolbert was behind him, and Lt Jonas Panik was next to the Admiral giving his brief. When the CNO IP personnel were done with their portion of the brief they took off and went on to get ready for their other briefs. Mr. Briant stayed and went through the rest of the OPS stuff as well as presenting his brief.

Mr. Briant left around 0745 because he had a meeting at the Washington Navy Yard. He was in the Antiterrorist Alert Center (ATAC) when the head of the ATAC came and told them to turn on the television; a plane had just hit the World Trade Center. Initially they thought it must be a small plane. As the second plane came on television Mr. Briant called CDR Dan Shanower to make sure he knew what was going on. Mr. Briant passed on what the ATAC was doing. CDR Dan Shanower told Mr. Briant to keep him informed. Within five minutes Dan Shanower was dead.

He spent most of the day at the Navy Yard. Shortly after the Pentagon was hit the CNO, ADM Keating and SECNAV came over to the NCIS headquarters to try to regroup and for protection. They set up a mini command center for them. Late that night they decided to relocate ADM Keating at the Navy Annex. Mr. Briant went back to the Annex to support ADM Keating and ADM Porterfield who had already relocated there.

The NCIS has agents assigned to the Pentagon. Through those agents they were initially hearing the plane had hit the helo pad. They tried to determine where the helo pad was in relation to the new Navy Command Center. Mr. Briant went to the Navy Annex where people were reconstituting and for the most part most people worked through the next day.

ADM Porterfield came to him after midnight on 12 SEP about some material that may have been left in an office that was near where the plane had hit. Some people from N89 that were very concerned about some material had contacted ADM Porterfield.

The next morning, 12 Sep, Mr. Briant went into the Pentagon shortly before daybreak. They had not yet boarded up all the walls and posted guards. He had his rain jacket on that had US Agent written on it along with his badge. No one challenged him. He found his way to N89. The hall was ankle deep in water. Light fixtures were hanging down and he hoped the electricity was turned off. It was dark; there was an acrid smell of electricity and other burning things. He found N89 in the E ring and the door was open. He took one step in the front door and stopped. He called a security person from N89 on his cell phone and asked him to walk him around the office to tell him where to look for material. He followed the N89 security person's directions around as he looked for classified documents. After checking several locations he was told to go down a hallway, but the hallway wasn't there. The ceiling was gone and the sun was shining. This was the first time N89 realized their office had collapsed. One safe they were concerned about had fallen with the collapsing building. He found another room where the ceiling had collapsed but many things were intact. Many of the pouches they were concerned about were there and he gathered them up. Mr. Briant then called some help in from his field office to help carry out more of the pouches. By the time these people showed up there were guards being posted and they would no longer let them in the building. They finally found a DPS Lieutenant who escorted them to the room where they cleared out the rest of the material they needed to rescue. After that the rules were made that no one went anywhere near this area.

After clearing out the N89 material Mr. Briant was able to get into the N3/N5 ADM Keating space and pulled out a couple of pouches he knew were there. Again there was a lot of smoke and water.

He had been directed to try to get into some N76 or 78 spaces but he couldn't get there due to deep water, darkness and smoke. He also kept getting to a room number that didn't match what they had described.

Most of the rest of 12 Sep he spent at the crash site. There were many organizations there getting together knowing they were going to go in to recover bodies and recover evidence at some point. They were gearing up to go recover this evidence. Mr. Briant was there to observe and report back to the DNI and ADM Keating. He was hoping to get into the Command Center so he could explain its condition to ADM Keating and ADM Porterfield.

Mr. Briant kept wondering where the missing CNO-IP people he knew and had seen the morning of 11 Sep would be found. He wanted to be the one to find them. He didn't want a stranger finding them.

On 13 Sep they decided they had gone from search and rescue to recovery. Mr. Briant got suited up and went in with a team. The engineers would go a few steps ahead and tape off where it was safe to go. Most of the ceiling on the first deck was intact; most of the plane went in above the third and below the fifth decks. As the plane went in it clipped a light pole, which clipped off the wing and the gas from the wing tank probably went in on the first floor. It was total devastation on the first deck.

Mr. Briant went in with the FBI. He knew the layout. As you went in the double doors you walked up a ramp. The Metoc guys were on the left and the N3/N5 watch on the right. If you went in the back you would go by the CNO IP people. As you went up the ramp you could see everything, everything was down. To the left was taped off in red where you couldn't go. Within that area were three bodies that had been tagged by the search and rescue people. They would put a body in the body bag; tag the body and the bag. All that was left in the area where the crash took place was bones, chest cavities, and skulls. There was no clothing. They would carry the body bags out to the Old Guard Army personnel who would then carry the bodies out the rest of the way. As the bodies went out there was a Catholic and Protestant chaplain who would both say a prayer at each bag. At the end of the hour they took out the three bodies. There were two more they could see, but not get to because they were beyond the engineer's tape.

Looking towards CNO IP he could see because there were no walls or anything. The main columns that held everything up were the only things to see, other than debris all over the ground. He was able to report to ADM Porterfield and ADM Keating what he saw in the Navy Command Center.

After this one time in the Navy Command Center Mr. Briant had to stay with the DNI. The DNI was very concerned about what they knew about the future, future attacks and issues. Mr. Briant stayed in touch with the other people down there. The deeper in they got to the Navy Command Center, the better preserved the remains were. There were only a couple of remains that they could do preliminary identification on.

Abstracted by:
CDR Carol O'Hagan
23 Apr 02

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Unclassified

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Transcript of Interview:

Interviewee Information:

Mr. Briant was born in ██████████, NJ in 1952. He grew up in northern New Jersey with 2 sisters and a brother, all older. They moved to Point Pleasant Beach early on and that is where he grew up. When he graduated from high school he went to Jacksonville University on an NROTC scholarship. He majored in Urban Studies. His first ship was the *USS Warden* as a Gunnery Officer. He did a tour with NCIS as an active duty officer in London, England. After this tour he tried to change his designator from 1110 to 1630 but wasn't accepted. Instead he took a job offer with NCIS as a civilian, working in Groton, CT. He joined the Navy Reserve, changed his designator to 1635 and has been a Reserve Intelligence Officer since 1980. After 2 years he was sent back to the NCIS office in London where he worked until 1984. He also worked on NCIS Special Projects, and with the Counter terrorism Division at various locations including Quantico and Panama. He has worked in various NCIS positions in the Washington, D.C. area including Deputy Director of Crimes Against Persons at headquarters. He is the NCIS Liaison to the CNO staff where he also provides support to N3/N5.

Topics Discussed:

Q: Describe where you were on September 11th, where you actually worked out of, what you were doing and just kind of walk through that day for us.

A. Again, I'm actually assigned to the DNI's office and every morning there is a meeting with the DNI to go over what has gone on since the previous day. I attend each of those meetings, provide input from the terrorism perspective, counter-intelligence perspective, other things that NCIS is doing that I think is of interest to the DNI. After that meeting I then go to the N3N5 meeting. I think back on those days it stood up at 7 o'clock every morning. They had just recently moved into the new Command Center. It used to be done in Admiral Keating's office and now we're doing it in the theatre of the Command Center. I attend first the DNI's meeting and then the N3N5 meeting.

Q. Where was the DNI's meeting?

A. I think it was up in his office at the time or it might have been on the CNOIP side of the Command center. As you know, they were co-joined at that point. I was at Admiral Keating's meeting at the time and I think back on it now and the people that briefed that day – Jonas Panik did the Intel brief that day and Jonas is gone. A lot of people that sat around me are gone. And, again, every time you think back you recall something different and it's just amazing. Again, to know that those people were there and then they're gone.

Q. What do you see from that day as you go back – as much detail as you can.

A. You know, sitting in a briefing theatre I remember sitting as you're facing the table where the admiral sat, I sat to the far right, the Intel guys were to my left, Dan Shanower was standing about one or two rows behind me. Vince Tolbert was behind. Jonas stood next to the admiral as

he gave his brief. All those guys were living and breathing and talking. And then when they're done with their portion of the brief which is usually right after the weather brief, they take off and do their own thing because they have about four or five other briefs they give every day. I stay and we go through the rest of the ops stuff and what have you and I do my little spiel. Again those guys were there, they were talking and then they went off to do their stuff. I left, I believe, about quarter to eight that morning because I had a meeting within the Washington Navy Yard at the Naval Criminal Security Investigation headquarters with our director. I went over about quarter to eight and I'm in the Navy ATAC, which is where we were having the meeting – anti terrorist alert center. I happen to be there when the head of the ATAC came in and said, “Hey, turn on the TV, a plane just hit the World Trade Center.” And the initial thought was pilot error; small plane probably didn't know the extent of what was going on. And then as the second plane came rolling in, I got up, went out, called Dan Shanower –

Q. Did you see the plane go in live as it was happening?

A. I didn't see the first one 'cause it had already happened and we saw the second one.

Q. Describe the room.

A. Essentially silence at that point in time 'cause everybody realized at once this wasn't an accident that there was something more to it than that. Entirely too much coincidence for something like that to happen. And then it was great because it was almost like clockwork – everybody kind of knew where to go and what to do. I immediately went to a phone and called CNO IP to make sure they were seeing the same things I was, which I knew they were but I wanted to hook up and say, “What is it that I can do, what can we do for each other?” The guy

who runs the ATAC went off to put out a navy blue dart, which is a message they do of flash precedence – hey, there’s something happening. Everybody just went into automatic at that point in time. As I said, I got on the phone, was talking to Dan. “Dan, you seeing what I’m seeing?” “Yeah, I am, what do you know?” “I don’t know any more than you do right now. Here is what the ATAC’s going to do. We’re going to do this, we’re going to do that” and the last words Dan said were, “Hey, just keep me informed, let me know what you’re hearing and let’s keep talking to each other.” I said, “Okay, I’ll be here, I’ll be on the other end of the line.” And then by my estimation – probably within five minutes – Dan was dead. He was a great guy. A guy that, you know a lot of things you don’t appreciate until they’re gone. You don’t appreciate that relationship you have. And then probably selfishly, think back, it could have been me. Where would I have been? And thinking it back through, and I don’t think I really thought about it until the day we had the recognition ceremony out in the southern courtyard for the people whose heroics were rewarded that day. The folks that went in and actually saved people.

Q. The Secretary of the Navy was giving –

A. Exactly. And it made me think about ‘Geez, what really happened that day? What would have happened if I had taken a different path? What would have happened if my director didn’t call me back for a meeting?’ What would have happened was, after Admiral Keating’s meeting, I would have gone back to my desk. On Tuesday mornings the DNI has a second meeting – a staff meeting – down in the IP, which again was co-located, and the meeting took place that day. I would have been down there. Now the meeting itself broke up after the first plane hit and everybody went to their offices to do their business so otherwise they would all be dead now, too

-- the deputy DNI and others would all be dead. If I had not gone to the Navy Yard, I would have been there at the staff meeting. I would have stayed behind and gotten on the phone and would have been talking to the Navy NI anti-terrorist alert center, but from the other direction; what's going on, leave the line open, let's pass information. So I probably would have been there with Dan, with Jonas, with Vince, with Angie, with you name them all, on the phone back with the Navy ATAC if I hadn't been called back to that meeting. So you kind of count yourself lucky sometimes and you wonder why not me? So that's how the day started and I spent most of the day in the Navy Yard. Shortly thereafter not knowing if this was the beginning of more attacks, the Secretary of the Navy, the CNO, Admiral Keating, came over to our headquarters and to try to regroup for protection. Certainly, we had agents all around. We're of course in the center of the Navy Yard and we set up a mini-command center for the CNO, the Secretary and Admiral Keating. Set up communications so they could communicate. Got them through the day essentially until they figured out where they were going next. And then late that night they decided to relocate Admiral Keating to the Navy Annex. And I went back that time to support both Admiral Keating and Admiral Porterfield who had already relocated to the Navy Annex.

Q. At what point did you realize where the Pentagon had been hit? The Command Center, CNO IP was at Ground Zero?

A. We had gotten word, I think initially (18:28 inaudible)... and we have a number of agents assigned to the Pentagon. We had probably at that time, four or five others in addition to me that are assigned in a number of staffs, OSD and some other places – DIA – and of course we tried to reach them to find out 'okay where are you, are you safe?' I think it was through them we found out where it hit. The first word we got was the helo pad. The helo pad, where is that in

connection with the new... And people from headquarters they didn't really have an appreciation with the new wedge, what's going on. I knew it was right here because again, standing in Admiral Keating's office where we used to have the meetings in Admiral Keating's office I could look down and see the helo pad so I knew where in relation to the new wedge all that was. And then you start to think, 'why the helo pad, were they looking to hit a gas tank or something?' and then I got preoccupied -- I was worried about my wife. My wife worked in the DNI's office. I didn't know where she was and, of course, all phones at that point were out. You couldn't call anywhere, even when you reverted to your cell phone. You couldn't even use the cell phone. My wife gets around a lot in her job working for the DNI. She did go down to IP; she did deliver stuff, picks up stuff, moves around a lot, so I had no idea where she was at that point in time. As it turned out, she finally got a hold of me probably around 11 o'clock and she was standing outside the Ritz-Carlton. They had evacuated everybody and she had been standing out there since things happened.

Q. Where was she when the plane hit?

A. She was in the DNI's office with the deputy and someone else. She said she felt the building shutter and everybody kind of looked at each other and said, "What was that?" And no sooner did they open the door to the passageway then black smoke was coming down the hall and they all just got out. And then, of course, their concerns were was, okay, nobody knew exactly where it hit at that point in time and what the damage was and what the casualty rate was going to be. So, again, around that time I was worried about her, but for the rest of the day it was focused on what needs to happen next, what can we do to support the three principals that were in this headquarters -- the Secretary, the CNO, and as far as I was concerned, Admiral Keating. Like I

said, later that night, we all left and went to the Annex and for the most part most people worked through the next day. Admiral Porterfield probably shortly after midnight came to me and said, “There is some real concern with some material that maybe left unattended in a particularly sensitive office that was where the plane hit.” At the time it seemed to be funny to be worried about material thing. Why weren’t we worried more about the people? But, quite honestly, thinking back at that point in time, there’s nothing you can do for the people. Obviously, there were some injuries and what have you, but you got to start looking at other aspects. Where are you going to go? And, as most military people realize, the way the process works here, things move by pouches, things move by folders and there are things that are sitting in people’s in boxes and in certain parts of the Pentagon some very, very sensitive things and because of the damage things are left open all of a sudden.

Q. How about the N89 stuff?

A. Correct. And that’s exactly it. The DNI had been contacted by some folks from N89 were very concerned, because as you are probably aware their office span – the plane actually went under their office – they stayed intact for awhile and then they got out and the whole thing collapsed. I took the hint from the DNI and went in there the next morning, probably shortly before daybreak and before they boarded up all the walls and posted guards. I had my ray (??) jacket on – US AGENT – big badge, thinking nobody would stop me and didn’t really think that someone would challenge me anyway.

Q. Were you challenged at all?

A. Not then, but later I was. Basically, I walked through, ducked under some tape that had been set up by the firemen and ran into two guys working on an elevator. They were checking to see what elevators were safe to use. I didn't have a flashlight so I asked if I could borrow their flashlight 'cause there was no electricity. So I found my way to N89.

Q. Describe that scene for us.

A. Walking down the hall it's, at that point in time where they were ankle deep in water and stuff, material hanging down, light fixtures hanging down. You're guessing that electricity is turned off, but you're not sure, and even if it is then you don't know if something is going to be energized for whatever purpose by whomever to test something. Very, very, dark. Acrid smell.

Q. Smelled like what?

A. Burning material. What you would normally describe as the acrid odor of either electricity or things like that that were burning. I made my way out to where N89 was, which was out in the E ring and again, when things happen people leave. You don't worry about spinning the dial and stuff and the door was open. Actually, I think the door may have been forced open and took one step in the front door and kind of stopped. And the best way to tell the story would be to tell you what I did a couple of steps further. I called one of the security guys from N89. A very, very good friend, a long-term friend, when I worked special programs a long time ago and I said, "Hey, you walk around the office and tell me where your stuff is and I can get my hands on" because there were a couple of safes they knew weren't locked and wanted me to close the drawer and spin the dial 'cause they knew firemen pulled and all sorts of people were roaming in and out. So I start at the door and I'm on my cell phone and it keeps dropping in and out because

of just usage not because of the battery but a lot of people were getting on their cell phones and were getting kicked off. So the guy says, "Okay make a right and when you make a right there is a little room there and it's like supplies and stuff and there shouldn't be anything there and there wasn't. Came out of that room and make another right and there is a small conference room white board, table, maybe eight chairs around it. Shouldn't be anything there. Fine, nothing there. Come out of there and make a right and go down the hallway. I said, "There's no hallway." "What do you mean?" I said, "There's no hallway. It stops there. It's all caved in – down around the third deck." "Well, okay, well then go here and go into so-and-so's office." "There is no office. It's not there." He said, "What's it like up there?" Around that time it was daybreak. They said it's going to be a real nice day up here because the ceiling was gone, the sun was shining, there was some water dripping and stuff from the fire hoses. I don't think they realized at that time that that whole thing had collapsed because there was no hallway, no offices. There was one safe in particular they were concerned about. I could see it probably down between the third and fourth deck. It had buckled and you could still see smoke coming out of the back probably through combustion. Anyway, fine, make believe you are coming out of the hallway, make a right, there's a bay of safes. They're there. I locked a couple of drawers and went into another room. The ceiling had caved in. There was some ADP equipment they were very concerned about that was intact and that was where a lot of the pouches and material that are usually left in overhead storage or in bosses were there. So I gathered up as much as I could carry, went out, called a field office. We have a special group in our field office that provides support to those guys and called a couple of their guys in to help me carry more out. They showed up and at that time, we tried to get back in again and by that time they had started posting guards and they wouldn't let us in.

Q. Maybe DPS?

A. DPS. So we tried to badger our way through and we finally found a very cooperative lieutenant and explained our situation and he was very, very kind.

Q. A DPS lieutenant?

A. A DPS lieutenant. He took us up to the room and we were able to clear out the rest of what we could carry between the three of us and got that stuff out. And then it was after that they basically made the rules and even the lieutenant couldn't have changed that. Nobody, no how, goes anywhere. They posted folks with M16s.

Q. How many do you know?

A. I'm trying to think at that point in time things were really starting to get organized. Of course, DPS had the lead from the security standpoint. Army, MDW had certain responsibilities, executive agent responsibilities. It might very well have been MDW, I'm not sure. OSD certainly had a big piece of this as to who could do what when. In the interim, it was done in stages so after we got the lieutenant to take us up to clear out N89, I sent those guys on their way and I was able to get back in the entry of five front office spaces – Admiral Keating's spaces because I know there are pouches that Commander Schofield (sp) provides every day. I went in and was able to pull up a couple of those pouches and get those out. And actually I gave thought of liberating Admiral Keating's flight jacket and I said, "No, I better not. One, somebody might think I'm a looter, and two, if the average troop saw me taking out the admiral's flight jacket, it's not quite equitable. You know, why should he get any special privileges. So quite honestly, I

didn't do it and nobody has to tell Admiral Keating that I had that opportunity and passed it up. But it's funny the things you think of. It wasn't a whole lot different than N89. A lot of smoke, water, sloshing around, but you do what you can do. You get in, get out kind of thing. I had been directed to try to get into some N76 spaces or maybe it was N78, I forgot, but somebody else had sensitive material and I couldn't get to it. The water was too deep, it was too dark, it was too smoky and where they kept sending me to a particular room number it didn't match what they were describing. Either I got it wrong or they got it wrong. The other thing that was a big concern to me was, what's the dissemination of this kind of thing.

Q. It's all to the archives. We can classify if we ...

A. No, this isn't classified; it's more of a cultural embarrassment. When I left the Pentagon to go to the meeting at headquarters, I didn't take my gun, my badge, I left it in my office, and of course I couldn't get into my office. When I came back later that morning to go to N89 spaces, one of my first stops was try to get back into N20 spaces. And with no electricity, I couldn't get through the lock, so I couldn't get in there to get my gun or my badge. And then I ended up doing my N89 thing and my other stuff, and when it came time to try to get back in, things had been locked down. I couldn't get in there; it didn't matter. I explained I was law enforcement. I explained my gun and my badge. It was like, 'too bad, you ain't gonna get in'. Finally, I get in about three or four days later and recover my weapon and my badge. I could go all week without carrying it to work, which I'm not supposed to. I'm supposed to carry it all the time. And you don't think of it, but when something like that happens it's the first thing you look for – where is it. Not that I would ever use it in this situation, but still you feel naked. I ended up doing that the first thing on Wednesday morning and then spending a good part of the day down at the crash

site, for want of a better description. Each of the military criminal investigative organizations – Air Force OSI, Army CID, NCIS, plus DPS, FBI – we’re all getting together ---

Q. Air Force is called what again?

A. Air Force Office of Special Investigation, obviously knowing that at that point in time there’s going to be a phase where you’re going to go in and you’re going to recover bodies, evidence. Again it’s a crime scene. It’s a big ole crime scene. And you are looking for information that would lead to the arrest and prosecution of somebody, somewhere down the pike, regardless of whether you realize that the hijackers on the plane are dead; they’re not going to be brought to justice. But there is something in there that maybe somebody can find and will identify other co-conspirators, whatever it might be. So anyway, we’re all geared up to do that. That was our field office job. Pete Hughes ?? that’s going to talk to you that is going to give you that piece he was in charge of our day effort in that. I was basically there to keep an eye on things, report back to DNI and Admiral Keating my observations, what I’m seeing, how things were going. One of the things I was personally hoping to do was get into the Command Center so I could eyeball-it and be able to come back and explain to Admiral Keating and Admiral Porterfield the condition; what it looked like. That didn’t happen Wednesday.

Q. Tell us what was going through your mind, what were you feeling about that because obviously you knew some of the people there and knew they were still missing, you had been with them the day before.

A. You knew by being able to get as close as you could understand that nobody was allowed in at that point except rescue people, firemen still at that point in time and by being able to see

things, talk to people coming out, you're comfortable that nobody is still alive in there. But you always hope that somebody deep in there who was behind the right pillar at the right time – because when things like this as fuel spray patterns go out it could be as simple as being behind a pillar. And as you know, some people did survive; they got blown out of the spaces. But more and more it's like nobody is in there that's alive and then you got to start thinking of well, if I was in there where would I want to be? And I would want to be up front and I want to go quick. I wouldn't want to be in the end where you may be suffocated or killed by falling debris or whatever. So you are wondering first of all your worst day and I talked to Dan. I could have been the last person Dan spoke to. He was certainly the last person I spoke to in there. Where's Jonas? Where's everybody? Angie I met right after POL ???(32.28) they had brought her over from Suitland along with Steve Mayer who works upstairs and we were all working on the POL ? thing. Angie, a very, very nice lady –

Q. She was one of the first civilians to come into that capacity?

A. They've had a civilian working in IP for a while. He recently rotated back to Suitland, but brought her over for that particular project. So again you are wondering where are they, what about their families, what are they thinking, what is going on? What role can you play in trying to help sort this stuff out? You want to make sure that justice is served as part of this whole thing. I guess my other feeling was I wanted to be the guy to go in there and find them. I don't know why. I don't know how to explain it. I didn't want a stranger to find them. It took me through Wednesday. I reported back what's going on, what I'm seeing. I knew at one point the admiral wanted to come down and try to get a look because it was his people, so did Admiral Keating. And I think ??? (34.02) had the admiral – don't recall what day – and then Thursday I

was politicking to be part of the team to go in. We have trained people to go in and do that. It was really a field office function and they are trained and equipped. You wear the Casper suits and stuff like that because there are a lot of toxic materials in crime scenes like this. And Pete again, who you are going to meet, he happened to meet the bureau guy who was running the body recovery team and they like to sail together or they were in South Carolina together something like that.

Q. FBI guy?

A. Yes. So Pete explained that he had this guy Chuck Briant who worked with those guys, knows the layout, he could maybe be some help to you. Again I was looking for that edge to make me better than somebody else to get in there because I wanted to get in there first. And I wanted to be one of the first recovery teams in there. Like I said, you had all sorts of search and rescue people – teams from Tennessee and other places – Fairfax County, structural engineers were going in there making sure it's safe for those people – the recovery teams to be in there. At some point in time you stop. It's not search and rescue it's recovery. And probably, I think it was around Thursday, til it was okay, we're in the recovery phase now. I got suited up, went in with the team. And you're only in there for about an hour at a time. It was hot and again you've got the mask on, the gloves, the boots and the Casper suit. And there was some hesitation about going in because there are engineers that go in and do toxic levels, and the toxic level was too high. And then it was okay to go in if you have a certain level mask that would protect you against certain toxins, but not all. Not everybody had the same kind of masks. Eventually we got in. The process was, you went in and the engineers were basically a couple steps ahead of you and were taping off where it was safe for you to go and beyond which it was not safe for you

to go. Most of the ceiling on the first deck was still intact, so it was like most of the plane went in above the third and below the fifth but as it went in, as you probably know, it went in with the starboard wing down, clipped the light pole outside and probably clipped off the wing and the gas from the wing tank went in down the first floor because it was total devastation on the first deck. Almost like you were in there when they first put up the -- used to be time when you had wooden oh what do you call the nails that you nail sheet rock to, now they're all metal nowadays -- every 18 inch studs. Now they are sheet metal studs. And that was about the only thing standing. Lights were down, water was down, partitions were basically disintegrated. It was gone. Nowhere to walk, you're just walking on 'stuff'. So we went in with the FBI and I knew the layout so we were able to go in the double doors you'd walk up a little ramp, as you walked down the METOC guys were on the left. The actual watch was on the right -- the N3N5 watch and then if you went in the back you'd go back by the CNO IP people. As you went up the ramp you could see everything. You could probably see to the next corridor. Everything was gone except for debris. The engineers had basically roped off safe areas where we were, but to the left out towards -- I think when you went into the Command Center you were actually going around the C ring. Probably not much more beyond there was taped off where you couldn't go and then heading out towards the E ring. But within that area there were three bodies that were tagged. The search and rescue guys although we were looking for survivors, when they saw a body they tagged it. So the first three bodies I saw probably were METOC people I'm guessing. Again that's where their office space was. It doesn't mean that someone wasn't in there visiting and moving around. So what you did, whatever else you could find you'd put it in a body bag, throw a tag inside, numbered it D1 through whatever and then they would put a tag on the outside and Like I said, the people I helped to take out were METOC folks. As I mentioned to you before,

that area where the crash took place, those people went quick. The only thing left were bones, chest cavities, skulls, no clothing. No nothing. If you're going to go, that's the way to go. I've been to other crime scenes – head wounds, gut wounds, not pretty at all – but again as crime scenes go, it's different when you see something like this. And essentially the process is you gather as much as you can readily identify. You put it in the bag, you tag it and we carry it out. We carried out to some of the Army guys – the Old Guard guys – who were there and they would carry it out the rest of the way. One thing that impressed me a lot was as the bodies went out there were two chaplains there – a Catholic chaplain and a Protestant chaplain. And you stopped with each body bag and they both said a prayer over the body bag, out of eyesight of people outside, but certainly, one cause it was the right thing to do and two, I'm sure that when things are said and done, you're at least able to tell the family, "Yes, there was a chaplain here" and I understand some of the families asked that question, "Was something done?" And it was. I understand talking with one of the Army chaplains they had a conference going on and not too far from the crash site. There was a roomful of chaplains, which was impressive and they all started working, but that really impressed me having the two chaplains there as each body bag was brought out.

Q. Were they Army, Navy chaplains?

A. One was Army and I believe the other was Army. Now there was actually a Navy chaplain outside at that point in time. They both had stoles, they both had Army uniforms on. They might have been in Casper suits, too, I don't recall. But I believe those guys were Army chaplains, but there was a Navy chaplain on the outside. At the point in time, there was a lot of concern with the rescuers, too. That's a very emotional process as you can appreciate. So

whether you're part of the search and rescue team, you're a firefighter or you're a cop, whatever it is, there's a lot of baggage you carry and the chaplains were there for those people as much as they were for anybody else. In fact, the NCIS staff psychologist who is very well trained in situations like this came by and met with each of the members of the NCSI folks that were there throughout the recovery period and talked to them. Probably when my hour was up we were able to bag three and take three out. There were two more you could see that were just beyond the engineer's tape that you couldn't get to. And I knew at that point in time I wasn't going to be able to do any more because I was needed elsewhere back at the Annex; other people needed to get in and do their thing. And again, what I'm thinking at that point anybody in that area is not going to be identified. There are no nametags, no uniforms, no nothing. The best you are going to do is, it's in the METOC area. It was in the watch area. So I figured those coming in after me would have a better chance of identifying folks. That took me through Thursday, went back to the Annex, reported visually what I saw to both Admiral Keating and Porterfield; here's the condition of the watch center, here's the process, here's what's going on, that sort of thing. Again, my impression maybe helpful to the people who went and maybe they didn't suffer, at least the folks in the area I was.

Q. What did you see as you looked towards CNO IP?

A. You couldn't get that far because the engineers wouldn't let you go that far. You have to have a little understanding of how it looked before but you could essentially see back there. I mean there were no walls, there were no partitions, there was no nothing. You saw the main columns that held everything up, but beyond that there was nothing except debris all over the place. I think I went back there one more time and spent the better part of the day down there

just keeping tabs on things and at that point in time, needed to stay with the DNI. He was very concerned about the future now, what do we know about the future, are there any attacks being planned? And that was where I was needed but I was able to stay in touch with the rest of our guys – Pete Hughes and others down there. Again, at this point in time, it becomes very strict process of identification and no one wants to let the word out as to who's dead and who's alive. A body is recovered, the remains are recovered, it goes somewhere; there's a preliminary autopsy done; it's sent up to Dover; final identification is done based upon DNA, fingerprints, one or two other criteria; word is officially given to family and very loathe to having any word leak out before that. However, some of my guys were able to pull me back and say, "Did you have a person named so-and-so?" I said, "Yes, I did." "Okay, he's accounted for." They can tell by a badge, by a nametag.

Q. NCIS?

A. Yes. My guys were on the subsequent teams that went in. Again, as you went further back into the area, the remains were more recognizable.

Q. How far back?

A. Towards IP.

Q. Which was towards E ring or the other way?

A. The other way and then in. It's hard to describe. And again you're back with the flow pattern of the burning fuel and what have you. But the deeper in you got the more preserved the remains were. People towards the E ring part, the closer out there you went quickly. Charred

remains. That was it. As the NCSI agents that were on subsequent teams went in were able to come across the remains there were identifiable they would call out to me if they saw a name tag, saw a badge, stuff like that. And there weren't that many. There was maybe a couple that I was able to go to the admiral and say, "We found so-and-so." With heavy caveats, that's preliminary, we don't know for sure, you can never know in these situations. And the last thing you want is to have warned somebody although well meaning put the word out, it gets back to a family member. That's incorrect. That took me through the first week and then the rest is (inaudible 45.14) stuff.

Q. Anything else you would like to add for the historical record?

A. Obviously you are going to get a lot from people in there. We're all heroes. And there were. They were doing their job. Happened to be in the wrong place at the wrong time. That plane could just as easily gone into any number of other places. You hate to think what was going through their minds while all this was happening. You hope that it was fast, that they didn't know, that they weren't waiting behind something to die. I don't think so. I think they all went fast. In fires like that, if you're not incinerated that burning fuel will just – it's like napalm – it just sucks the air right out of you. You hope that nothing like this will ever happen again, but the world being what it is, there are no guarantees. And I would say that it's a good bet that something else will happen sometime somewhere; if not the Pentagon, somewhere else.

Q. How is that from seeing intelligence as being a part of looking forward to see what could be happening. How do you cope with that, how do you deal with that? Are you able to turn it off?

A. It's hard to describe and a lot of it changes as time goes on. Of course the first day you're looking for what's going to happen in the next 12 hours, 24, 36. And then as time goes on you just get inundated with so much information that it never comes to a realization. You become desensitized; you try not to because that's one of the things that the bad guys probably want you to do is let your guard down at some point in time. It's human nature; you have to. But for every person who sees what they think is Middle Eastern looking too long at a navy ship and then when someone walks over to say something to them of course they jump in the car and speed away. And in fact it's something entirely innocent, but you get hundreds of those reports and you get desensitized. And I think that is one of the things. You see so much, you read so much, so much intelligence ???(47:33) or other intelligence sources methods. If you take it literally something can happen every day and yet nothing happens. There have been a number of arrests. I'm sure some acts have been thwarted because of activities conducted by law enforcement and intelligence worldwide, our allies included. Special places like Singapore and other places where the potential for attacking Americans, in particular the navy, were real and have been thwarted. You know, you thank God for situations like that, but in the whole you see so much intelligence; things as I see taken literally things that happen a couple times a day and just never happens. What do you do about it?

Q. Where does Chuck Briant go from here?

A. I'll probably stay in this job probably until I retire. I can retire in October. I have no plans to retire; federal law enforcement you can retire at 50, so if I'm smart I'd retire and then find a high-paying job with a contractor somewhere here in town and get my retirement pay plus another salary. I like what I'm doing. I think I see it expanding more to provide more support to

the entire CNO staff to become more aware of what the other N codes do, particularly N7 and others and then being able to offer what NCSI can do to support that particular offer, make them more aware of what we can do for them, and while still having a full time person who provides support to N2. What I see happening is someone will bring somebody in to do what I am doing now and then free me up to provide more support to N3/5, N7 to vice chief and others. It's difficult because we work for the Secretary. Our day-to-day report to the General Counsel and the Under. Yet just about everything you do supports the uniformed military, but they don't control us, they don't own us, so it's a civilian uniform. Help the tension I guess, which I don't like, and I think in a part of the job I see is to do more to give the vice chief and others visibility into what we are doing for the Navy so let somebody else in this (49:47 inaudible) keeping the Secretary and the General Counsel up to speed and let it be my job to keep the vice chief N3/5, N7, the DNI, up to speed as to what we're doing. I hope.

Q. Any plans on post-law enforcement?

A. I don't know. Probably a contractor type job or I can use the expertise and the knowledge I've developed over the years in counter-intelligence and criminal investigations. Make a lot more money doing what I'm doing now, but still be of value to the Navy. I'd like to work for a contractor that is doing Navy work as opposed to somebody else. I've got my two years in this reserve job is up in October. I've just put in paperwork to extend another two years that would take me to 29 and-a-half. I've got to go to 30, so from a reserve perspective I would like to stay working on the Joint staff -- J2 -- until I hit 30 and then retire from the Navy.

Q. Chuck, on behalf of the Naval Historical Center, thank you for sharing your story. It will be a part of the Naval Archives.

A. Thanks for giving me the opportunity.

Transcribed by:
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