

**Naval Historical Center  
Oral Interview Summary Form**

**Interviewers:**

CAPT Gary Hall  
CAPT(s) Carol O'Hagan  
Mr. Randy Papadopoulos

**Interviewer's Organization:**

Navy Combat Documentation Det 206  
Navy Combat Documentation Det 206  
Navy Historical Center

**Interviewee:**

CDR Samuel Perez, Jr.

**Current Address:**

5B453 – Pentagon  
Washington DC

**Date of Interview:**

10 Oct 2001

**Place of Interview:**

NC2 – Crystal City  
Arlington, VA

**Number of Cassettes:**

One (Digital)

**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:**

Graduated Naval Academy (May 1980), graduated Naval Postgraduate School with master's degree in National Security Affairs, currently assigned to N76 as the Future Ships Section Head.

Office was 5<sup>th</sup> deck, B ring, Room 453. Approximately 75 people (civilian contractors, government employees and military) in the office including 2 flag officers, ADM Balisle and ADM Wilson.

1. He was sitting at his desk when he heard a loud explosion and felt a significant shake and rattle. He could see to his right outside the window debris and smoke from the initial impact. He guessed it was a bomb explosion. He was in the process of saving a computer document when he heard the order to evacuate. Went through cubicles to make sure no one was left in the office. Met people who explained that the normal exit route was blocked because of the collapsed roof and continued with them to the emergency exit. Could sense the fear, urgency and panic in people around him.

2. Helped a couple of ladies to the emergency exit and was doing another check for any remaining personnel when somebody came up and said that a first aid kit was needed because of injuries to C ring personnel. First aid kit was given to him. He ran down and exited at the open space between the C and B ring, between the 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> corridor. Could see holes in the C ring

side of the building (facing away from the E ring and towards the B ring). He could see smoke, fire and people that had been hurt. First visual he sees is a woman hanging from the second deck window with several men below her telling to jump and that they would catch her. He could see people inside the building running from one window to another trying to decide the best way to get out of the building. During this time he heard a plea for help. He could see a Navy LT in khakis who needed help. He could see that the LT was flash-burned; uniform in front was intact but exposed skin was burned. Skin was charcoal gray in color and hands were blistered. Helped him to the first aid station that was set up inside the C-B ring space and made sure there was nothing immediately life threatening. Returned to help carry a LCOL out who had a leg injury. He then heard that there were some people who were trapped behind a door. He could hear three distinct voices coming from behind the door but was unable to get to the door because of the fire blocking it. There were about 5-6 of them trying to access the space to get the people out. The DPS and an OS2, possible a Command Center security guard, ordered them to back away from the door because they were afraid the windows were going to blow out or that structurally the C ring was going to collapse. They tried to tell the DPS person that there were people trapped inside. Backed away about 15 feet and when no one was looking they went back in with PKP to try to get the people out.

3. The second time they were ordered out was because of the threat of another incoming plane. They eventually went back in but by this time smoke was thicker and fire was a lot bigger. They had to back out one more time. By the third or fourth time going back in he could no longer hear voices.

4. They then broke up into stretcher teams and stayed around until about 3:00 p.m. The firefighters didn't show up until after noon, maybe 1:00 p.m. Spent the time assisting with the hoses, helping the firemen off with their gear, provided them with water, etc.

5. When the firemen got there it became obvious there wasn't much we were going to be able to accomplish. As the firemen were coming out I kept asking if there was anyone still in there. The firefighter had a look that said there is nobody left and said it was like trying to put out forest fire with a garden hose.

6. We waited around until about 3:00 with hard hats and hand respirators in hand waiting for someone to give us something to do. Finally they said we need more stretcher-bearers on the E ring side outside. So they split us up. Half of us went out there and that is when we knew for the first time that it was a plane.

7. I didn't realize how big it was until I was helping the firefighters and some FBI agents were on the scene. The FBI agents were almost in line with the 4<sup>th</sup> corridor and there was a hole punch in the C ring wall. But this was a hole different from the holes we have been working in. It was more of a kinetic hole, like something had punched its way through an object. On the other side of the hole was an aircraft tire and that was his first indication that it was not a Cessna they were dealing with but a large passenger plane. Someone told him that the plane was clipping light posts as it came in and that is when he associated it with the World Trade Center attacks.

8. He left the courtyard at around 3:30, maybe 4:00. He lost track of time. He didn't call his wife until about 2:00. He had to borrow someone's cell phone to get word to her. He couldn't get through because all the cell phone lines were tied up. He finally called his mom in El Paso, Texas and told his mom to call his wife.

9. It wasn't until he was walking outside the building to help those on the outside that he and realize the true extent of the damage. He could see the pieces of the airplane and a piece of the fuselage had the American Airlines distinct paint scheme - silver and red lettering.

10. It's not like you were jumping into a roaring fire or anything. There were pockets of fire here and then another fire over here so there wasn't a single point when we inside that passageway where all my god I am at risk to fire. It was fire is over there put it out before it gets any worse put it out so you can increase your staying time never felt that I was at risk to fire.

11. The problem was with the DPS. It was very frustrating they didn't understand we have been trained in damage control and fire fighting techniques. And they didn't understand we were not putting ourselves at risk needlessly. Everybody that went in there assumed the positions as they would at fire fighting school; everybody was low to the ground, duck walking, nobody had turn there backs to the fire. It was a great example of how valuable damage control training really was. In retrospect the biggest lesson I got out of it was that I never would have thought that the damage control training would have serve me at the Pentagon.

12. It wasn't until I got home that I realized I had some burns. The other thing was apparently tar or plastic had melted and fallen from the ceiling and my back and shirt were all full of that. It wasn't until the next morning when I was having a shower that I realized I had that on me and peeled it off. It was a little painful.

13. Our spaces were virtually untouched but there was a lot of smoke damage or soot. When you walked in a couple of the windows were blown out - I imagine from fire fighters trying to de-smoke it but that's it. I couldn't see any water damage there definitely wasn't any fire damage. So all you had to do was wipe the soot off and you were good to go. We were basically back to business on that Thursday and more smoothly than he would have anticipated.

#### Lessons learned:

-The lesson I took out of this if you going to be put in harm's way the Pentagon is the best place to be because there are a lot of folks out there that are just phenomenal. For me it was neat to see people run towards the fire not away from it. You had just as many people running towards the fire as you had away from the fire.

-Second the damage control training fire control training you receive out in the fleet is invaluable. Worth its weight in gold.

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**Subject Terms/Key Words:** Pentagon rescue, Reconstitution, Medical care, Pentagon; Terrorist Attack; 11 September 2001; triage; evacuation; lessons learned; Defense Protective Service; FBI; carnage

**Transcript of Interview:**

**Interviewee Information:**

Born in [REDACTED] TX, graduated Naval Academy (May 1980), graduated Naval Postgraduate School with master's degree in National Security Affairs, took command of USS Reclaimer (ARS 42)(1993-94), Ballistic Missile Defense Organization (OSD/Navy), took command of USS Vincennes (1998-00), 1 year fellowship at MIT, currently assigned to N76 as the Future Ships Section Head.

Office was 5<sup>th</sup> deck, B ring, Room 453. Approximately 75 people (civilian contractors, government employees and military) in the office including 2 flag officers, ADM Balisle and ADM Wilson.

**Topics Discussed:**

TRACK ONE

Q. (5:55) Could you take us back and account for us what happened on the morning of September 11<sup>th</sup> – from when you arrived?

A. I got to the Pentagon about 6:20. We had had indications that there was going to be significant churn in our program. I'm currently the section head for the DD 21 – it's a significant program in that it's the next generation of the navy's new construction combatant. We had heard that we were in for a budget battle because the Marines had decided to pull support for our program. The Marines had been one of the most vocal backers for the need for the DD 21. I realized that in the morning that it was going to be a busy day because we were going to have to justify or come up with additional justification. And essentially the morning started out as I expected with a call from the Chief of Staff at about 6:21 a.m. saying that he needed a couple of pieces of information.

The morning literally flew by and the next thing I knew, I was walking back from the Chief of Staff's desk from the main entrance back to my cubicle and somebody came in; actually CDR Bob Bauer came in and said, "Hey somebody flew a plane into the World Trade Center, quick turn on the television." Somebody turned on the television and I said that I had to call the program manager first because CAPT Cosnick had given me some tasking. I took a quick trip to look at it and I saw the first initial reporting of the World Trade Towers. I was sitting at my desk talking to CAPT Chuck Goddard, the program manager for DD 21, when all of a sudden I heard a very loud explosion and felt a significant shake and rumble. The windows rattled and out of the corner of my eye – I was facing towards the front so I could see the window out of my right eye. I saw debris and smoke from the initial effects. I guessed it was a bomb explosion. It was

violent. I don't know why, but I just thought that somebody had brought a suitcase in or some C4 or something like that.

As a matter of fact, the program manager jokes with me every time I'm on the phone with him. He says, "Hey, don't hang up on me like you did the last time." Because I had said, "There's been an explosion, gotta go." and I hung up my phone, but then I realized that I had had about three hours worth of work on this piece that I was saving. And I looked around and nothing was happening; there wasn't any visible damage to our space, so I started saving information; the information that I had on this program. Again, there was nothing. Now about this point, probably about three or four seconds into it, you could see some of the debris falling down – snowflake kind of stuff.

I was saving it and the order came to evacuate the building. I stayed there for probably longer than I should have until a captain came over and said, "You gotta get out of here." I went around the backside of the offices. There are a couple of places – a conference room, a couple other pukas (cubicles), that are in the back that are not inhabited, just to make sure that nobody was in the back. I went through those, made sure nobody was there, made sure everybody got the word out. By that time, people had already tried to exit through the normal entryway. They were coming back saying, "You can't get out that way because the roof has collapsed and roof damage debris that is blocking our way." They went out the emergency exit. The emergency exit is probably about ten feet away from my cubicle. Very close. Those folks started going down and I realized at that point there was a lot more panic and a lot more urgency in a lot of the folks as they were evacuating.

You could definitely sense fear and you could definitely sense that some of the folks coming out of the office were pretty excited. I helped a couple of ladies out the door. Made a further check of the spaces and there were two of us left when somebody came up from the bottom and said, "We need a first aid kit." There are some people hurt on the C ring. Ran and got the first aid kit. He handed it off to me; I'm not sure why he did that, but I then took the relay and sprinted down below and I exited out on the C ring, not the courtyard, but in the open space between the B and C ring. It's between the fourth and fifth corridor. So, at the point, when you got down there, there was a chain link fence about five feet from our entry from where we exited. And the chain link fence was still up.

Now there were holes in the C ring side of the building and this would be facing away from the E ring towards the B. So could see holes, fire, there was smoke coming out and you could see people that were hurt. One of the first visualizations I got was a lady that was literally hanging from the second deck window ledge and she had about two or three guys underneath her that were telling her to jump; that they would catch her. Well, you immediately realized that they needed more people inside the chain link fence and there were people still inside the offices. You could see them running from window to window trying to figure out which was the best way to get out. So we couldn't get in because the chain link fence was locked. There was a big chain with a padlock and there was a guy jumping over the chain link fence. So about three or four of us tried to push the chain link fence over, but that was not going to happen because it was cemented into the concrete. Out of nowhere this policeman or one of the people that works in the Pentagon came with a key and opened it. There were other people that were getting ready to

jump from the second deck, second window. I'll go see if I can help them. As I was running through because there were bricks and all sorts of debris scattered about between those two corridors – B and the C ring.

I heard this call for help and it was pretty frantic. I looked at one of the holes and I can't remember if the hole was a doorway or if it was a hole that was blown out. I can't remember that right now. I saw this naval officer, a lieutenant in khakis. Immediately saw that he needed attention because – now he was standing up and ambulatory and I ran towards him and said, "Are you okay?" and he said, "No, I'm hurt." He was trying to convey to me that he was in pain. He was flash burned. The only ways I can describe it is he looked like he walked through a fireball. His uniform in the front was intact; a little singed you could tell there was smoke and burn debris, every part of his exposed skin looked like it had been spray painted with charcoal, some sort of charcoal colored. It was a gray that I have never seen before. And his hands had some blistering. But every other part of him was that charcoal gray color. He was still walking so I just helped him out. We had set the first aid station just on the other side of the chain link fence, walked with him and sat him down, and checked to see if there were any other injuries to make sure he wasn't bleeding or to make sure that there was nothing immediately life threatening. Seaman Whitmarsh was there, CAPT Cosnick was there, a couple of other folks and we looked at him. Afterwards as I was walking to the first aid station or triage station, his shirt had been melted and almost into a 'g' string into the back, it had been just melted into a rope. I had a pocketknife and I tried to cut that away. I got about half way through it and Seaman Whitmarsh had a leatherments. So we cut the rest of the way through that shirt. Luckily there was nothing as bad as the exposed parts so I said, "He's looking like he's in fairly good shape."



To me he looked like he was going into shock and he was absolutely insistent on getting medical treatment, but there were still other people that were in closer to the fire. So I took off my jacket and put my jacket on him and told Seaman Whitmarsh to take care of him and make sure he is okay. I went to help CAPT Cosnick who was trying to carry out this army lieutenant colonel and he had a leg injury; he couldn't walk. I got on his left side, CAPT Cosnick was on his right side and we carried him again to the first aid station that we'd set up.

I was going to go back for some more because there were some more folks out there when somebody said, "Hey, there's some folks that are trapped behind a door.", and it was probably about ten feet in from the chain link fence and there was a doorway that was still intact, but the edges around it were blown out. You could actually see into the doorway without looking in through the door. By that time, there were some PKP bottles that had shown up, so we grabbed some PKP bottles and went into the door. The lights had been blown down and were dangling, and there were pockets of fire. If you entered the door off at the one or two o'clock position there was a big mass rubble of debris. It wasn't like there was this huge fire or flames or anything that were coming at you, there were just pockets of fire, a lot smoke. So we took the PKP extinguishers and tried to extinguish as much of the fire as we could. I could hear three distinct voices in a room more towards the fourth corridor and the door was barred. If you are looking at it, the fourth corridor would be to the left, the fifth corridor would be to the right.

I could hear at least three voices and obviously panicked, obviously looking for a way out, but we couldn't because there was a small door and it was filled with smoke. We couldn't get the door open. So we went back a couple of times to see if we could put some of the fires out to cool it down a bit. We were looking for hoses. If we had a hose, we could have been a lot more

effective, but we couldn't find any hoses and we couldn't find any water stanchion pipes to do that. I say 'we' because there were four or five of us that were trying to access this space and a couple of navy guys, a couple of army guys, a marine, and we were all trying to go into that space to try and access that door. At that point, the DPS and a shore patrol – a second class OS that was a security guard. He might have been a navy command center security guard. They ordered us to back away from the building. Their rationale was that they were afraid that the windows were going to pop out or that structurally, that the C ring on that side would also fall out. We tried to tell them that there were folks in there. He got very insistent. As a matter of fact the petty officer went a little berserk I'd say because he said, "If I have to, I'll use my side arm." So the DPS guys went with him and that we had to back away. So we back away ten or fifteen feet, waited until no one was looking and then went right back in. We grabbed some more PKP extinguishers and went back. The second time they pulled us out was apparently there was a threat. They heard that there was another incoming plane and they wanted us backed out. So we backed out again and we could still hear the folks. We were telling them that we were trying to get to them. By this time the fires were bigger and the smoke was a lot heavier. It was getting a lot harder to get further in as far as we were.

We had to back out one more time and I think the third or fourth time we went in, we couldn't hear any voices. Somebody found a big stanchion from a piece of the building that had blown off and we were going to try and use that as a battering ram, but no voices. By that time the smoke and heat made the stay times in that passageway pretty short. Following that we all just backed out and looked around for anybody else that needed help and didn't find anybody. An army captain named LeMay just say, "Hey, let's break up into stretcher groups or rescue teams so that when the firefighters come, we'll be ready to send teams to help the firefighters bring out

casualties. We broke into four or five stretcher teams, those that were around us, those that were primarily accessing that one pretty much stayed together and formed one of the stretcher teams. We stayed until about 3 o'clock. The firefighters didn't get there until about 1 or 2 o'clock. It wasn't until afternoon that they started accessing the fire from the inside out. When they got there, we fed them hoses. They were ingressing; we pulled the hose back as they were ingressing. One of the guys was a plug man opening and securing the supply of water whenever they called for hit. We'd help them off with their gear and water. We were given water. By this time they had set up a fairly sophisticated first aid station in the center courtyard of the Pentagon. Water had arrived, food was starting to arrive – pastries, potato chips – and it was starting to get a lot more organized. The hospital folks were there organizing. Before that, they backed us out of that C ring, the middle of that C and B ring passageway about three or four times. We went back just to see if we could find anything. People brought in hard hats, respirators, air masks, construction type respirators and we were hoping to go in with some firemen, just waiting for the firemen to come and see if we could help in any way. That never happened. When the firemen got there, it became obvious that there wasn't going to be much that we were going to be able to accomplish because as the firemen were coming out, I remember one guy just looked and I kept asking, "Is there anybody in there?" and he just looked at me with this look of just absolute – a look that said, 'there's nobody left.' And he said, "It's like trying to put out a forest fire with a garden hose." We waited around there until 3 o'clock. Hard hats in hand, respirators in hand waiting for somebody to give us something to do and they finally said that they needed more stretcher bearers out on the E ring side – the outside and west side. So they split us in half and half went out there and we waited. The first time that I actually knew that it was a plane – people had their pagers and cell phones – I didn't have either, so somebody had said it was a

plane. Well, I didn't realize how big it was until I was helping the firefighters and some FBI agents were on the scene and as FBI agents, they were more towards the fourth corridor almost in line with the fourth corridor, there was a hole punched in the C ring wall. But this was different from the holes that we were working in on our side. This hole was a kinetic hole. Something that punched it's way through an object not a blast hole. On the other side of the hole was a tire – an aircraft tire. And I realized that this was no Cessna. I thought it was a Cessna loaded with explosives. This was one of those big honking aircraft tires. So that was the first indication that I had that it was a large passenger plane. Then somebody else came in and said, "Oh yea, I saw the whole thing. It was a very large airplane that came in and as it came it was clipping light posts." That was when it was confirmed, in fact, part of the World Trade Center. That was when I really put two-and-two together. It was just like that, a commercial aircraft. We exited from the center courtyard I'd say about 3:30, maybe 4 o'clock. I didn't look at my watch I think the whole time. And my wife says that I didn't get word back to her until about 2 o'clock.

Q. (25.54) How did you finally do that?

A. I borrowed a cell phone. I had been trying to borrow a cell phone since about noon. We broke and had some potato chips and stuff like that, but I couldn't call my wife and I couldn't call home because all the cell phone lines were clogged. I finally called my mom in El Paso, Texas, and told her to call my wife via the LAN line and that worked. My wife finally found out about 2 o'clock, 2, 3 o'clock. When I walked out, we walked out as the teams going out to help the folks on the outside. It was the first time that I saw the true extent of the damage. You could see pieces of the airplane and the only reason that you could tell that it was an airliner was there was a piece of fuselage with a distinctive American Airlines paint scheme – silver with the red

lettering. We waited there for a while. One of the things that struck me was the scene. You looked at the building and the trees were absolutely scorched, but they were still standing, and somebody said, “Wow, look at those trees. That fire was pretty hot.” And somebody right next to me, “Those trees will grow back by next year. They’ll be fine.” The other thing I remember looking at it was there were three priests by this army truck and they were having some sort of memorial service. There were only the three priests. They were just holding it to themselves. I broke off because all we were doing was sitting there waiting and stood by the three priests and participated in the prayer service. When that was done I waited until probably 5 that’s when the Old Guard (Army), people from the Old Guard starting come in. The Old Guard started coming in and they pretty much had it from there and I said, “Well, there’s not much for me to do here.” I took mass transit so I went to Pentagon City and went home.

Q. (28:33) When you heard that you were evacuating the building, do you remember who was giving that order?

A. Well, there was the siren that was going off – the strobe light and some sort of siren. I don’t know if it’s a wailing or beeping siren. And there were other naval officers that were saying that we got to get out here. The fact that people were saying that we had to get out here, the bomb blast and the siren going off pretty much – and I think there was a recording, a recording that said, ‘Evacuate’, or ‘Exit the Pentagon’.

Q. (29:14) Do you remember if the lights were still on at that time?

A. Yes, the lights were definitely still on. I was working at my computer. I was saving stuff left and right.

Q. (29:24) Was there a plan that you knew to follow, an evacuation plan for your space?

A. No, there was not.

Q. Was there a plan to reconstitute the office?

A. No there wasn't. I also want to point out that you're asking the worst person in the world because I had been there for a grand total of less than two weeks. As a matter of fact, the day before the attack, that was the first time that I had the program. Before that I had spent the week before that with my relief. The very next week, that Tuesday, all this goes off. Subsequently, it turned out that we didn't have a reconstitution point and there wasn't an evacuation plan.

Q. (30:29) As part of that relief had you been familiarized with the building?

A. I had been here before for four years. I'd served a four-year tour and during that I was at BMBO and then I was on the OSD side and I was very familiar with the building. I knew it from experience.

Q. (30:49) You said that once you got outside there was some breathing apparatus stuff. Do you know where that came from?

A. Some of those workers. We were sitting there...our concern was getting those people out and we were very frustrated that we didn't have access to some of the fire fighting equipment that we're used to having onboard a ship. That was the biggest frustration. Basically we knew how to do the job. We felt that we just needed better tools to accomplish the job. So we saw

some folks and said, “Hey, can you get us some?” And they provided hardhats and respirators, but the hoses and the water never showed up unfortunately.

Q. (31:38) Were the lights on in that area where those people were?

A. No. It was absolutely dark.

Q. (31:45) Were there any emergency lights on?

A. You know if there was you couldn't see them because the fire was bright enough so that it would have drowned them out. I keep telling people I want to make sure that it's not like you're jumping into a roaring fire or something like that. There were isolated pockets of fire here and then another fire over here. There wasn't a single point when we were inside that passageway where I felt 'Oh my God, I'm at risk to fire'. Not at all. Fires over there, put it out so that it doesn't get any worse. Put it out so you can increase your stay time, but that's it. I had never felt that I was at risk to the fire.

Q. (32:37) You mentioned the OS2 security person that was a little bit of a conflict. Do you remember any other conflicts you were having in your continuing to try to go in and rescue those people?'

A. The conflict was with the DPS. It was very frustrating in that they didn't understand that we had been trained in damage control and fire fighting techniques. They didn't understand that we were not putting ourselves at risk needlessly. But everybody that did that had a very good indication of what they were doing, what they were trying to accomplish, and how to do it. For instance, everybody when they went in there, they immediately assumed the positions that you

would at fire fighting school. Everybody was low to the ground, duck walking; nobody had turned their backs to the fire. It was a great example of how valuable that damage control training really was. In retrospect that's probably the biggest lesson that I took out of that. I would have never thought that that damage control training would have served me in the Pentagon, but it helped a tremendous amount.

Q. (33:54) About how long would you estimate or guess you were in that passageway trying to get those people out, the several attempts that you made?

A. We were in there about three or four times and I can't remember if it's three or four, so I'll say three. Probably about three or four minutes -- at first it was longer because we were sitting there asking ourselves 'Well, how do you do that?' and then during the second and third time, it was shorter. It had to be four because during the subsequent times you couldn't talk as much because you were sucking in more smoke and it was hot. It got hotter. The second time that I went in the top of my head was absolutely on fire. I didn't realize why, so I had to put my khaki cover on and smash that down over my head so that I could get a little more protection, but that's probably a couple of minutes.

Q. (35:08) You would guess 20 minutes total time?

A. No way. Maybe 10 or 15 and we were rotating. There were four or five people in so you would go in there, exhaust your PKP bottle. The person in the front trying to do the access would come out and stay in for as long as he could and then back out. There were ample people. As soon as someone went out, there was somebody else waiting to go in and come out.



Q. (35:36) Were they all navy?

A. Navy, army guys, absolutely. A fruit salad of uniform colors.

Q. (35:46) All military? All uniform?

A. All uniform folks. Afterwards during the stretcher team, we had a couple of civilians that showed up and started pitching in. But in trying to access those people in there, that was all military folks.

Q. (35:54) During this time, evacuating and trying to do some rescue, was anybody in charge?

Who was in charge?

A. Nobody was in charge. The only time that somebody was in charge was when army Captain LeMay – and essentially all he did was just divide us up; you six over here, you six over there. But as far as being in charge, firemen started going in, accessing the space – C ring corridor down the fourth corridor -- and we just grabbed some hoses and started feeding hoses. Nobody told us to anything.

But back to the DPS folks, they kept backing us out and they kept ordering us to back out when we knew there were people there. One of the times, because the attack was coming, they backed us out all the way into the courtyard. The F-16s flew overhead and I remember this vividly – the F-16s or 15s flew overhead. All I heard was just the roar across and the gray silhouette and I said, “Okay guys, we can go back now.” And the DPS guy said, “No, you can’t go back.” And I said, “Yes you can, because that’s a CAP (Combat Air Patrol). That’s your protection.” And he had no clue as to what I was talking about. I said, “Those are the good guys. Those keep the bad

guys away, they won't let the bad guys come in." He still didn't understand and finally, when he was distracted by something else, we just went back in for another round.

Q. (37:48) Going back then to the initial moments of just prior to and actually of the explosion, you were watching TV and then you heard, so to shift it over to try and back up stuff on your hard drive.

A. Actually, I wasn't watching TV. Before I made the phone call, I turned, looked, made the phone call and punched in the numbers and started talking to CAPT Goddard. I was on the phone with my computer screen active because I was hoping to get some information that I could include in my point paper that I was ginning up.

Q. (38:18) When you glanced at the TV then, did you see both World Trade Centers burning or just one?

A. I'm not sure. All I saw was just a picture of a tower with smoke. I don't think I remember even seeing flames.

Q. (38:38) And then the other question I had was the actual explosion itself. Could you tell me approximately how loud it would be? I was thinking could you compare it for example to the sound of a 5-inch 54 ---

A. That's exactly what it was. It sounded like -- and the rumble. It sounded like a 5-inch 54. If you've ever been on an Aegis or Spruance class destroyer, in CIC, when a 5-inch 54 goes off, the forward gun mount goes off, and the rumble was significantly more violent than the shaking. The rumble was pretty good.

Q. (39:20) And the third thing was, you mentioned three priests. Were they military chaplains or civilians, or could you tell?

A. Yes. Two of them were military chaplains – one of them had a black gown, cassock.

Q. (39:43) So what time did you head home?

A. It was about 5 o'clock – five-ish.

Q. (39:52) Had anybody in your office called to see if you got home, did somebody observe you?

A. Yes, somebody did. When I came back outside, I saw some guys at the office – CAPT Schreeder and a couple of other folks. There were some guys in the office that helped us access that building. Mike Lancaster, a guy that used to be in the office that shifted offices with Greg Goddard, but when we came out one of the more senior personnel in the office definitely laid eyeballs on me. Plus, people saw that I had gotten out and that I was essentially helping set up the rescue. It never dawned on me that anybody would be concerned with my safety.

Q. (40:47) Did you see anyone in your direct chain-of-command operating after evacuating your spaces from your office?

A. Yes, absolutely. They stayed there helping us. Admiral Balile was out right there in that chain link vicinity directing folks. CAPT Cosnick, his EA, was doing the same thing. I helped him bring out an army guy. I just happened to stay around a little longer than anyone.

Q. (41:21) What happened after you got home? How were you?

A. Tired. I didn't realize it until I got home that I had a couple of burns. Nothing major, but it wasn't until after I got home that I realized, ' why is my hand look so bad?' I had some burns on my hand. The other things was apparently tar or plastic melted was falling from the ceiling, and my shirt was full of that. So I trashed out my trousers and there was also some of that –like when you cut off the nylon webbing it falls and hits on there – I had a couple on my arm and a couple on the back of my scalp. I didn't realize that I had those until I took a shower the next morning. What the heck is that? Pulling those off proved to be a little painful – discomfoting I should say. Anyway, I got home and my wife and three daughters were there. My eldest daughter is a student at Georgetown and she was pretty scared because she says, "From where we could see, we thought the whole Pentagon had been blown away 'cause all you could see was smoke. I couldn't see the Pentagon. All I could see was smoke." They knew that I was okay. I turned on the television because I still didn't know what happened. I knew that the World Trade Center had been bombed and the Pentagon had been bombed, but when we were inside the courtyard, we heard reports of so much more. We heard that a plane had flown into the Capitol, that there were car bombs at State, and I think those were the things, so I wanted to see what other damage had been done. It turned out that those reports were incorrect. So I turned on the television and sat around and waited. Somebody called before I got there that said that you had to check in, you had to call a 1-800 number and check it, so I checked in. Somebody from my office called doing a double check to make sure we were safe.

Q. (43:54) Did they give you any information about what you were supposed to do the next day?

A. No, they said, “Stand by.” We got a call later on that said “Don’t bother coming, we’re still trying to put together what the plan of action is.” That was it.

Q. (44:14) How did you find out and when did you find out where your office was going to be?

A. That was put out by a phone tree by the person that I was working with had set up a phone tree where we called everybody and we met at Crystal City. The office was essentially split. Maybe a third of our office was here in Crystal City.

Q. (44:45) How long did it take to get the office up and running?

A. We were conducting business that Thursday – Wednesday was off – so I can’t say, but I know we were answering questions and doing business because other parts of the Pentagon were still working. So I know the office was conducting some business, definitely not at the pace that we going before.

Q. (45:17) Still in that office or someplace in Crystal City?

A. Here in Crystal City. We couldn’t access our office. But most of it was just trying to get reorganized, just trying to find places to sit and to camp out, phones, a place to hook into your e-mail -- stuff like that. Business was being taken care on that Thursday.

Q. (45:42) And how has that process gone?

A. All things considered, more smoothly than I would have anticipated. I’ve moved three times since then, but that’s not a function of the organization, it’s just a function that I’m a more junior to some of the other folks out there and don’t have squatters’ rights. I saw an opportunity to go into some contractor spaces and jumped at that and then had to move twice since then because

somebody has come up with a plan to put us in a location here at NC2. All-in-all, the support we have gotten has been phenomenal. The contractor support for computers, telephones – turning that office space that we were in – you had people plastering and painting it within days after we got there. I was impressed.

Q. You have our own computer? Is it your old computer?

A. Actually, last week they opened the Pentagon so that you could access it. Our spaces were virtually untouched. There was a lot of smoke or soot damage. When you walked in, a couple of the windows were blown out, I imagine from firefighters de-smoking it, but that's about it. I couldn't see any water damage or where they tried to put out any fire. There was definitely no fire damage. All I had to do was wipe off the soot your stuff and you were good to go. I initially went and got unclassified CPUs and hooked them into the laptops we had been given. They had some laptops with docking stations from the Navy-Marine Corps Internet and hooked them up to our office. I unplugged those and put our old machines in, got a bunch of the files that we access most, kept on going.

Q. (47:46) So you were able to save your work that you were busy trying to save when it all happened?

A. Yes, it was all there. Thinking back on it it's probably not a real smart thing to do. It's not a very flattering reflection on myself.

Q. (48:12) As you think back on it, what are the lessons learned from your perspective?

A. The lessons that I took out of this are that if you are going to be put in ‘harm’s way’, the Pentagon is probably the best place to be because there’s a lot of folks out there that are just phenomenal. For me, it was comforting. I shouldn’t say ‘comforting’, but it was just neat to see people running towards the fire and not away from the fire. And you had just as many people running towards the fire as you had running away from the fire. A lot of people have requested my story, but I keep trying to tell folks that ‘My god, I was just one of a bunch of folks out there just doing a little bit to help.’

The second lesson learned was that damage control training, the fire fighting training you receive out in the fleet is invaluable – worth its weight in gold. I regret not being able to help those people. I don’t know what happened to those folks. That’s probably the most distressing part of the whole thing. Not knowing whether they got out or not. But, that said, if we had had a fire hose, access to to a fire hose and water, we could have increased the stay time and kept the smoke down a little bit. But given the tools that we had, I assume we made quite a bit of progress and, frankly, I’ll state this on the record, if they would have let us do what we were trained to do, I really believe that we could have broken that door down. But the fact that we were interrupted several times and it’s clear that these DPS folks just have no idea what our training encompasses and what we’re capable of doing. They really thought they were protecting us. They really thought they were acting as our advocates. I don’t think that was the case that day. In fact, I think we had a better handle on what was going on than they did.

Q. (50:47) Is that something your organization has tried to capture somehow?

A. Absolutely. It’s funny you should say that because we immediately went over and got a recall bill, did the emergency evacuation drills, put out an assembly point for any disasters and

we rehearsed those. We're in the process of getting better at that. But as far as the relationship with DPS, they'll never change that. And the reason they'll never change it is because your civilians are in charge of the Pentagon. Lest anyone forgets, that is a civilian-run building and I don't care what your rank is, unless you're part of the CNO, those DPS guys rule.

Q. (51:44) In your mind, is there anyone who stood out particularly as being spectacular or impressively heroic or is there somebody that you saw that really did better than average job?

A. I was trying to keep up with Mike Lancaster and George Coy – CDR Mike Lancaster and CAPT Coy. I looked at those guys and CAPT Cosnick and those guys were the ones that I said “Wow!” They need help and I need to get on their six and make sure that I'm providing as much help as possible. The other folks, entering in that space, people were giving about as much as they could give.

Q. (52:46) It has been a couple of weeks and more on a personal side, how is your family reacted: Have you had opportunities to talk with them about it?

A. I have three daughters. The first one is a junior at Georgetown, the second one is a senior in high school here in Springfield, and my third daughter is 12 – 13 in November – she's autistic but autism has such a broad spectrum and she understands a great deal. If you look at her it will take you awhile to realize that [REDACTED] is not like every other kid. She understands a great deal, but still there is a translation factor.

The biggest impact was on the middle daughter. She was having a conversation with one of her friends and [REDACTED], if you push her button is very outspoken, but generally a very quiet person. But when you light the fuse, it tends to be fairly dramatic. And one of her friends, they



were instant messaging, she said, “Well, it was those people’s time”, as if were some natural disaster or hurricane and that just absolutely sent ██████ into a whirl. She took offense at that and she said, “It was not their time.” And apparently she and this girl had an argument. ██████ used some words that I wish she hadn’t used, but teenagers will be teenagers. So the girl called her back and they had more words over the phone. I said, “██████, stop! You gotta bring this into perspective.” Finally ██████ told me what was going on and I said, “Wow! This girl really needs to understand that this was not just a hurricane or a lightening strike, this was an act of terrorism.” Frankly, I was very proud of ██████ at the fact that she was not bent or that she understood the gravity and the morality of what had occurred. And this young girl’s father called me up and we kept playing phone tag. The last time I just said, “Hey, look, I understand what your daughter’s perspective is, here’s my perspective. From someone who is a military officer I can offer you a lot more if you care to listen.” He never returned my call so we left it at that. ██████, the eldest daughter, she bought herself a knife much to my chagrin, and I said, “██████, you’ll probably going to stab yourself before you do anyone else any harm.” And ██████ had a little bit of trouble during the first couple of weeks getting to sleep and she was edgy because she knows what happened, but she can’t put all the pieces back together again and didn’t understand how safe or unsafe the family was subsequent to that. My wife, god bless her. She really has taken this in stride. The first couple of days, every time an aircraft flew over, she was a bit gittery, but she has handled it very well. My parents have been calling me a lot more frequently.

Q. (56:41)Is there else that you want to say for the record?

A. I guess the thing that I want to emphasize is the fact that the officers from every stripe, Army, Air Force, Navy and even the civilians, because when we were on those stretcher teams, those guys were out there right with us. If a fireman would have said, "Hey we need you guys to enter this place to do x or do y" you would have probably had to fight to get to the front of the line.

Transcribed by:  
LN1 Carol Hamilton, USNR  
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