

PMC-XIII CLASS SURVIVES PENTAGON TERRORIST ATTACK

September 11, 2001

BACKGROUND

The thirty Crane employees listed below comprise the thirteenth Public Management Certificate (PMC-XIII) class. This class is offered to both current and future Crane managers as a precursor to the Masters in Public Management (MPA) program conducted by the IUPUI School of Public and Environmental Affairs. Seven courses comprise the PMC curriculum, and the course entitled "Defense Policy in the 21st Century" is the Capstone. This weeklong course, conducted in the nation's capital, allows interaction with some of the US Navy's top officials at the Pentagon, Capital Hill, and the Old Executive Office Building. Two of the class members were absent from this class.

PMC-XIII Class Roster

Jim Allen	Troy Allen	Roger Clark
Trent Frady	Mark Gillenwater	Doug Hackman
Mat Hardman	Greg Hays	Carl Jarvis
Steve Kinney	Shashi Kumar	Richard Marshall
Steve McAtee	Bill McGannon	Frank Mitchell
Eric Moody	Al Moore	Jo Ann Moubray
Don Peckinpugh	Doris Richardson	Eric Scheid
Roger Shaw	Greg Smith	Dane Speer
Rick Suniga	Craig Taylor	John Vaupel
Dusty Wilson	Charlie Cox (absent)	Phil Embry (absent)

THE PENTAGON

The second day of the course was called "Pentagon Day". A Navy bus picked us up at the hotel and took us to the Pentagon. The first meeting of the day was scheduled for 0900 with Honorable Susan Livingstone, Under Secretary of the Navy. We met in conference room 5E490 in the newly remodeled section of the Pentagon. This room is located on the 5th floor off hallway E between Corridors 4 and 5 (see pictures below). Because the bus was nearly 20 minutes late picking us up from the hotel, we did not reach the conference room until about 0910. Ms. Livingstone began speaking to us immediately upon our arrival by informing us that terrorists had attacked the twin towers of the World Trade Center in New York City – just a few minutes earlier – by hijacking two planes and flying them into the two towers. At that point, it dawned on me that we could be in a "targeted" area and might be in danger. Therefore, I said a short prayer as I often do, "Dear God, please keep us safe!"

Ms. Livingstone stated that she would have to cut her talk short due to another important meeting, and then she began her discussion of "The 21st Century Navy; An Environmental Scan." Her discussion focused on her administration's frustration

stemming from the lack of effective strategic planning since the fall of the Berlin Wall. She continued by stating that the Blame Game was being played and no “bottom line plan” was on the horizon. She wrapped up her talk in short order and began a question and answer session. Dusty Wilson asked the first question, and she was in the middle of answering the question at approximately 0935 when it hit.

A large blast shook the entire room. Several of the ceiling panels from the suspended ceiling fell to the floor and the light fixture in the middle of the room came crashing down on the conference room table. Smoke immediately began filling the room from the light fixtures and vents in the ceiling. Ms. Livingstone calmly but firmly stated that we were under a terrorist attack, and we should immediately leave the building. As we began to exit the conference room, a few people attempted to head down hallway E to the right. Troy Allen opened the stairwell door directly outside the conference room to the right only to discover the stairs had been demolished and thick, black smoke filled the area. Others headed down hallway E to the left and encountered a group of Pentagon employees heading toward them – using their normal evacuation route. They informed these employees that the stairwell was blocked and encouraged them to head the opposite direction.

By this time, the whole area was completely filled with smoke. The confusion and congestion in the hallway forced several of us to remain in the conference room for a short time – probably less than a minute. Those near me attempted to stay low – underneath the smoke, so I followed suit. The smell of the smoke was nothing like anything I had experienced before. It smelled nothing like a campfire, nothing like burning plastic, and nothing like gas, kerosene, or other burning fuels. Someone later stated that it smelled like the after effects of a TNT explosion. We were forced to cover our mouths and noses with our jackets, shirtsleeves, or other available items to prevent smoke inhalation.

We continued to make our way slowly down hallway E dodging fallen light fixtures and other debris that had fallen to the floor. I heard someone yell, “Watch your step – there’s a step down right here”. The entire structure beneath us had given way causing the floor to separate, and there was a step exceeding 12”. As we reached the next corridor (Corridor 4), we realized the lights were out. Because this inner passageway was completely filled with smoke, it was impossible to see anything. I was not familiar with the building and I had no idea where I was or which way to head. I realized I was breathing hard due to the adrenaline rush, and I was having difficulty breathing due to the smoke and extreme heat. This is the first time during the incident where I began to be concerned about whether or not I would make it out alive.

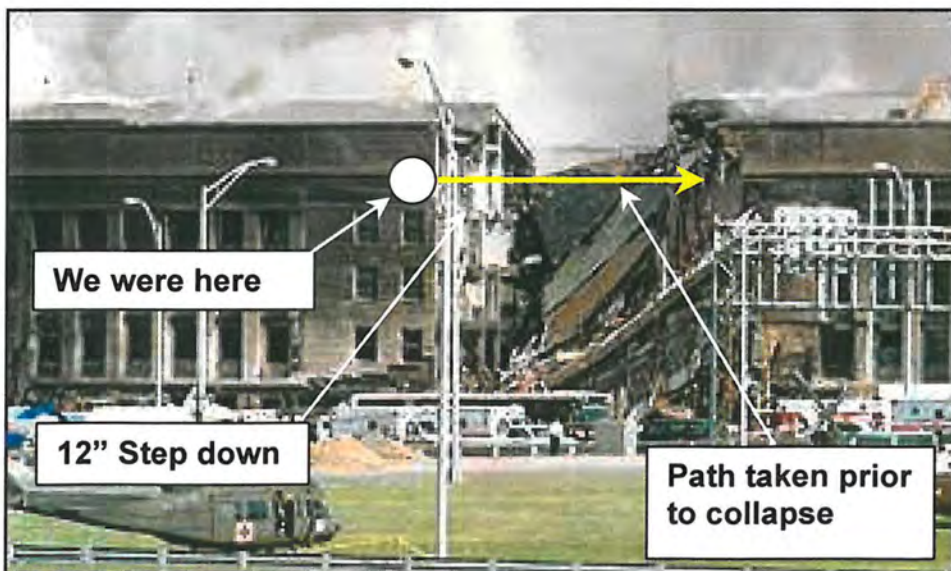
There seemed to be silence – just for an instant – and at this point, I feared for my life. Fortunately, there was a Pentagon security official ahead of us directing traffic. I heard him direct us to grab on to the person ahead of us and keep walking in his direction. Unfortunately, when I reached out to grab the person ahead of me, nobody was within reach. I felt someone behind me grab my coattail, but there was nobody for me to follow. I sensed I was lost, so I called out for the security guard, “Keep talking so I can follow

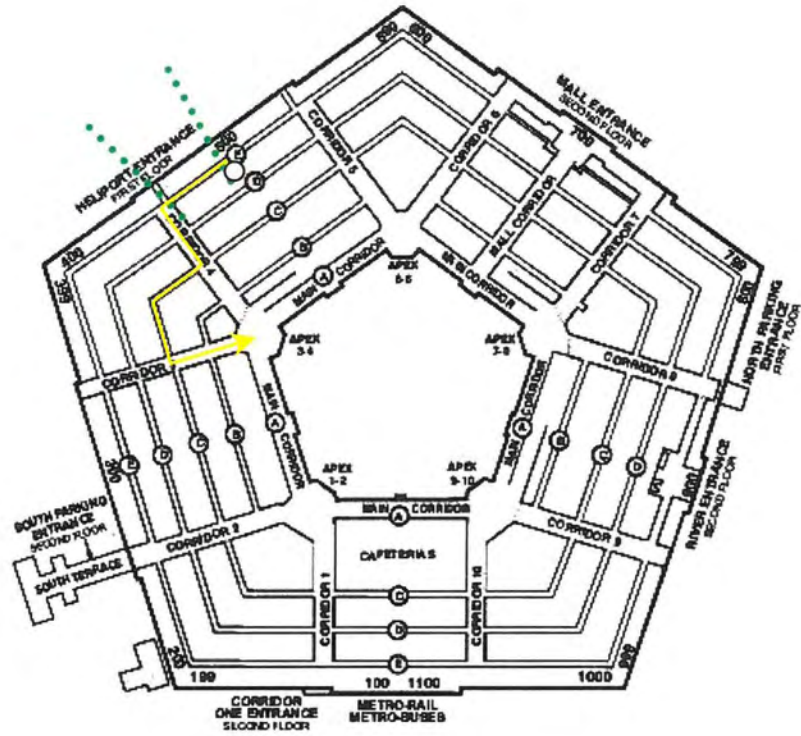
your voice.” He told us to find the wall and follow it. I began to panic more because I could not immediately reach a wall. I called out again for him to keep talking so I could follow his voice. He encouraged us to keep walking – that we would see some light ahead. It seemed like an eternity even though it was probably only a few seconds, but I kept walking – hoping I would not stumble over something I could not see. Finally, I began to see some light ahead, and I was able to see the security official who was guiding us. This man was an angel of God sent to lead us through the valley of the shadow of death to where there was light.

We continued to rush down the next corridor that was lit, and the smoke seemed to diminish. We quickly went down several sets of escalators to the ground level where we exited the building. Once we were a safe distance away from the building, we stopped to be sure everyone was accounted for. Somehow, our whole group was able to remain calm and collected, stay together, and get out of the building without injury – all within a period of 20 minutes.

We heard from other employees outside the Pentagon that a third hijacked plane had crashed into the Pentagon causing the explosion. As we contemplated the events that had just happened, I had the sinking feeling that we would soon discover the real danger we were in, and how fortunate we were to get out alive. Also, there may be many people in adjacent portions of the building who would not make it out alive. Several of us took a taxi while the rest walked – nearly two hours – back to the hotel. We all watched as the story unfolded on television networks. My suspicions were verified as I correlated the information provided to us prior to class (i.e. Pentagon maps and the location of the conference room) and live footage of the destruction on CNN. The plane crashed into the first three stories of the Pentagon between Corridors 4 and 5 and penetrated three layers deep. We were located on the fifth story, between Corridors 4 and 5, and were only one layer in from the outside of the building. Therefore, we were almost directly above (not more than 50 feet away) from the area of impact. As we were evacuating, we actually walked across the portion of the building (where we had to step down) that collapsed only 30 minutes later.

We all agree that we were extremely fortunate to survive this devastating situation. Early estimates indicated that 800 Pentagon employees may have lost their lives. God Almighty had His hand upon us! This is my recollection of the events of September 11th, 2001. Others in the class may remember things differently, but I have made my best attempt to record the events as I remember them, and I have come to some conclusions about how close we came to being a statistic of the tragedy. – Eric S. Moody





PMC-XIII Class members happy to be out alive!