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INTERVIEW OF

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TAPE TRANSCRIPTION
PROCEEDINGS


, please state your full name.

: And you are a sergeant first class?

: That's correct.

: And your unit, please?

: Bravo Company, 3rd United States Infantry, the Old Guard.

: You're in 2nd Platoon?

: Right.

: And your position is?

: The platoon sergeant.

: What were you doing on the morning of 11 September?

: We had just -- I'm fairly new here so we were practicing what you call SNOPE (phonetic), sword qualification. But we were in the Delta Company watching television, watching the attack on the World Trade Center.

And about, I guess it was about 9:40, maybe a little earlier, we went out back and began to practice again. Actually, we were just discussing the World Trade Center incident
and I saw a plane fly over from our right side. I guess it was a United Airlines or whatever.

And I knew -- I kind of said, "Oh, shit," excuse my French. But the first sergeant said, "What's going on?" I said, "Oh, I just saw a plane fly over. It was really low." And I said, "The landing gear is up and it was moving pretty fast."

And then we heard an explosion, walked around the corner and saw the smoke.

: So you saw the plane actually before it went into the building?

: Right.

: And you realized that it had crashed into the Pentagon or you --

: Well, being new here, I was -- you know, I'm not -- now I'm better oriented than I used to be. I just knew it had crashed in this direction over here.

And then a couple minutes later we were out in the parking lot watching the smoke cloud and then someone drove by and said, "Yeah, it hit the Pentagon."

: What were your orders immediately after the attack or what did the company do?

: We just pretty much went into a muster, got full accountability. You know, a little bit of confusion. Not confusion but heightened alert status, you know, whether we should draw weapons and the chain of command were talking about that, you know.

We got into battle dress uniform, our work fatigues, and just stood by waiting to do what we needed to do.

We were all in a heightened sense of alert already because of the IMF deal going on
and we were practicing civil disturbance and so on, so we kind of knew something was going to go on, but didn't expect that.

[Name]: So your most immediate mission was to be out there for riot control for the International Monetary Fund conference?

[Name]: Right. That's what we were gearing up for.

[Name]: Okay. Was there any sort of preplanned assignments that you knew of the company having, like in the event of protests at the Pentagon or anything?

[Name]: We were expecting to go out. As far as receiving an operation order on where we would be, you know, that wasn't put out as of yet.

[Name]: How long did you remain in the company area after the muster before you went to the Pentagon?

[Name]: We slept here the first night and we went night shift -- I'm trying to get this right. The next day, which was on the 12th, we showed up at 2000 or something like that.

[Name]: And what did you do there?

[Name]: What did we do? We -- actually the first night for the first four hours I think we secured the hallways in the Pentagon, the corridors leading into the impact area. It was pretty smoky and smelly still at that point.

And then the last four hours of our eight to twelve hour mission there the first night, we cleared debris just to the left of the impact area on the first floor. There was a lot of debris still in there, you know.
Now, how did they set up? Did they operate by platoon?

: Right, we would rotate platoons.

: Okay.

: So when we rotated into what I think they called light labor, which was, you know, taking the debris out, another platoon rotated into the Pentagon for the security. And I believe we had one platoon that was standing by for detail, heavy labor or anything else that came up.

: Now, what was your immediate reaction on seeing the Pentagon and the damaged area from after having the experience of having seen the plane before then? Did you see it on TV, pictures on TV prior to going over there on the 11th?

: No.

: Okay, you --

: Well, no, I probably had. I can't really recollect if I saw it.

: What was your first impression of actually seeing the Pentagon with the --

: Well, I was pretty much in awe. I mean, I spent a couple weeks there and every time, you know, I would still stand there and stare at it. It never really faded away on the horrific, you know, happenings that happened there.

Inside, though, was really unbelievable. I mean, I would never have expected to see the devastation and the fire and the personal effects and all that laying around.

: Now, did you or your platoon work with the fire and rescue
personnel during the time you were there?

}: Yes, we did. They would tell us -- I guess they were
driven by the engineers on the ground because when we went in the first night, you know, I
didn't know how unstable the building was. It hadn't even begun to be shored up yet, from
what I understand.

And that's all we were doing. We were clearing a beeline to positions that needed
to be shored up first and they would direct us on where they wanted us to clear. They were
pretty happy that we -- you know, they said we did in two and a half hours what it would
have took them 24 hours to do. I don't know true that was, but.

}: Now, so you cleared the routes and they did the actual shoring
work?

}: Correct. We'd get in there, would shore, you know. If
anybody found a body or parts or whatever, we would notify, you know, someone outside.
We just continued to move debris in a big chain. Airplane parts in one pile and building
parts in another.

}: Where were they putting the piles at?

}: Right outside. They had created an entrance, created one
or maybe they took down the door or whatever. But there was a big entrance just to the left
of the impact area, about 15, 20 meters.

}: Okay. What measures were taken to protect your safety that first
night? Or what was your uniform?
Our uniform for the first two nights, sir, was strictly BDUs and a mask and a set of goggles. A red or a construction helmet and black Army work gloves. You know, just standard issue. So it was not a whole lot, you know.

And the horn would go off and we would just, you know, evacuate the building in an orderly manner. There were soldiers that were going in in the, I forget the name, the Tyvek suits or whatever, the white protective suits. But for the first two nights we went in there just in BDUs.

When did you get the white protective suits?

It was our third night there, third or fourth time that we went back in the Pentagon.

And did you keep wearing them every day after that?

Yes, after that.

Okay, would you describe those for me, please?

They were a white rubbery suit. I'm not sure of the material but it's just, it's pretty thin. And they had booties on the bottom. It's just like an overall. We wore two pair initially and then later towards the mission we'd just wear one suit.

We had rubber boots such as a fireman boot or something like that, and you would tape it up with 100-mile-an-hour tape, duct tape. We also had latex gloves on. On top of that you had rubber gloves like dishwashing gloves on top and you would tape that in or tape the sleeve over the gloves. And we would wear leather work gloves as well. Plus the
hat.

And at that time they started trying to get us full face masks rather than the two-piece, safety goggles and the respirator over your mouth.

[ ] How was it working in those?

[ ] Pretty good. There was a couple nights before we got the full face masks that, you know, you could still -- there was quite a stench in there and that's something I won't forget, you know, the mixture of smoke and fuel and to me it just smelled like decay in there, you know.

And that would seep through occasionally, you know, until you got a good mask.

Every time we went there we got a different mask for about the first week and then we started just keeping our own.

[ ] What was your emotional reaction to the wreckage?

[ ] I was just glad to help out, really. I mean, I would rather be there than anywhere else because I felt like I was doing something. I wasn't sure how I was going to react at first, you know, because I haven't seen a whole lot of dead bodies, you know. I've seen the occasional in my 18 years, but I handled it pretty well.

I mean, I think the thing that got me through it is seeing, you know, horror movies and stuff like that. To me when I was there and I saw the bodies it just, you know, didn't seem real. Like I was looking at a wax museum or something like that. And then afterwards I would contemplate it more, you know.

[ ] So you were getting through with saying, "I'm in something that's
false"?

: Right. Yeah.

: Now, your company was doing the night shift?

: Right, we did the night shift up until just the last few days of our tour.

: How did you get through that? Did you get enough sleep during the days?

: That was a little rough. The soldiers were kind of walking zombies at first because we would come back and we would have, you know, have to prep for the next mission.

And then you have soldiers that live maybe 20 miles away so they'd have to drive. And we were driving, leaving post in civilian clothes, so they had to get here in time to change back into BDUs. They had to take showers before they left.

So they weren't getting much sleep for about the first week and then after that the first sergeant was a lot better at letting us go immediately. You know, after you took a shower you put on civvies. You fell into a routine so it got easier.

: Now, give me an example of the routine of a typical night's work there after the first couple days.

: Well, we'd show up probably about 1800 or so. We'd show up and while the chain of command was receiving briefings we were rotating out, relieving the next company, the company that would be leaving. So that would, you know,
maybe take half an hour to get situated.

And then they would receive briefings on what we were to do that night and how
the rotation was going to work, or they knew how the rotation was going to work but they'd
just refine it a little bit.

The soldiers would pretty much take advantage of all the free chow out there
initially. They'd go and they'd eat dinner and then we'd get busy, either rotate in the
building where you could work anywhere from four to five hours, you know, or we also
rotated to the north parking lot where some companies would help sift debris. Actually, we
never did that.

We just pulled security for the north parking lot. There were some instances that
happened there as far as trying to keep the people away, confiscating film and this and that.
So we did that a couple nights and that would be a full shift. Your eight hours would be
just securing the north parking lot, the FBI site.

\[\text{[Speaker]: Now, when you were doing the security it was just your presence there. Was this armed security or --}\]

\[\text{[Speaker]: It was just our presence. I wish it was armed. But the FBI had a lot of weapons out there, so if we needed something we would just contact them.}\]

\[\text{[Speaker]: Why you do say wish it was armed?}\]

\[\text{[Speaker]: Well, you know, we felt we were soldiers, if you're on}\]

\[\text{guard you just feel a little bit better.}\]
Okay, the routine is a soldier on guard has his rifle and magazine?

Exactly. And we're out there with a flashlight, that's it.

How did your troops hold up under this?

They did pretty good. You know, a good chain of command keeps them from panicking. When they would blow the horn and we'd be in the building you could see the tendency to just take off running, you know. You'd have to keep them orderly in existing and, you know, trying to get a count.

You know, a big thing in the Army, if they see their leader is calm then they're going to be calm. They held up pretty good. I heard a couple instances in other platoons where soldiers had a little difficulty dealing with the traumatic scenes in there, but our guys did pretty good.

What was done for soldiers who saw the traumatic scenes or for your own soldiers to help them?

Well, we just monitored them, looked at them. They had a debriefing site out there but I think that debriefing site was pretty much for if you went in there to actually carry bodies out.

You know, we just pretty much would work debris and, you know, you would sight something and you would inform somebody. But we never actually had to go in and load bodies and carry them out.

We had numerous family support groups here for the spouses. Our chain of command would talk to us every day we'd come back, "Watch for these signs, watch for
these symptoms." The whole chain of command was pretty active in monitoring the soldiers.

: Now, do you have a family here?

: I did. They're -- my wife is currently back in Georgia visiting family.

: Okay, so were you living off post or do you live here on post?

: I live off post, about six and a half miles from here.

: And how is she doing?

: Actually she had left the 9th of September, so she called me on the 11th here, asked how I was doing, you know. I told her I'm doing fine and so on.

: Okay, so she called to find out if you were safe then?

: Right. Right.

: I heard people talk about the chaplains being out there. Did you observe them?

: Right, we had a lot. Marine chaplains, Army chaplains, civilian priests and so on. A lot of them out there. They would come up to us and talk to us prior to getting into the building, kind of hang out and, "Hey, how is everybody doing?"

You know, sit down and talk with us maybe once or twice.

Of course, they were always accessible. If anybody wanted to talk to them, you know, it wouldn't be a problem.
232: How did the soldiers react to that?

233: I think they liked to see it, you know. They liked to see it. I didn't see a lot of them taking a lot of use of them out there. That's not very good wording. I didn't see a lot of them utilizing them out there. Not in my platoon, anyway, you know.

237: What was done in the way of -- with the chaplains we have the psychological aspect of the morale, the letting out of tension. What else was done in the way of trying to keep up the troop morale?

240: Other than the chaplains, just the chain of command trying to make sure you had the max amount of time off. You know, they didn't keep you there and mess with you too long so you could go home and get some rest.

243: You know, just motivational talks from the chain of command. The first sergeant, the company commander. "You guys are doing a great job out there. The FBI and engineers said that, you know, you cleared what would have took them a whole day," and this and that.

247: You know, I think motivation was pretty high because everybody wanted to help out.

249: What about Red Cross, Salvation Army? I've heard Burger King and McDonald's were all out there.

251: Right.

252: Did they --
: Just real nice to you. You know, "How you doing?"

Everybody was real impressed by those agencies that you just listed. We're also, you know, looking forward to our next CFC campaign to give to the Red Cross and Salvation Army. The soldiers were pretty impressed.

: So they made sure that you had food and water and Gatorade and stuff?

: Right. Right. They were friendly when you walked up there. You know, "Hey, you guys are doing a great job," and this and that.

: Just a positive attitude?

: Right, exactly.

: Is there any particular scene or event that took place that stands out in your mind?

: I would have to say when someone shoveled an ear off the floor in front of me. That sounds out pretty good.

However, we came across a scene that had three -- two Naval officers and a female secretary. You know, the Naval officer was sitting in his chair. His watch had stopped at the moment of impact.

Another one was laying on the floor. And the secretary was kind of laying near the first officer, face down, and all you could see was the back of her, you know, hair. That scene right there, you know, pretty much stands out in my mind.

: And then you called the FBI in and --
Actually, someone else had discovered that scene. Our platoon was in there moving debris to shore up another area and our route was right by that scene. So they were there. They were marked for future photography and removal. But they were there at the time.

So you and your guys were being moved past that?

Right.

How did your guys react? Did they --

You know, we -- how did they react? They reacted pretty positively. We didn't see a whole lot of carnage in there, you know.

And everyone wanted to -- not to sound wrong, but to take a bigger part of it, you know. And so I think they were glad to see that they, you know, got the full effect of the Pentagon, you know, and the disaster. And they reacted okay, good.

So that will be probably the incident you remember the most, or is there something else?

That and watching the plane fly over. I think that was the most shook up I was, was when the plane flew over and I knew something was wrong.

You know, we had just got done watching the World Trade Center.

Now, did your platoon -- did they keep platoon cohesion during the rotations?

Absolutely.

Okay.
Yeah, squad and platoon.

Now, if a platoon member, let's say, came up on something, let's say a sight such as this, and said, "I can't go back in there. I can't take it anymore." Was he allowed then --

Right, we weren't going to make him go back in.

Okay.

Right. You know, they had the only senior enlisted and officers handling the bodies in there when they did have to do that. So, you know, that's the way we were briefed.

Like I said, we never did partake in that. But we weren't going to make a PFC or a specialist, you know, grab a deceased soldier or whatever, civilian working at the Pentagon and put them in a body bag. All they were going to do is just carry them out.

(Inaudible.)

Right. Well, carry the bodies.

Oh, carry them out after they're bagged.

Right, exactly.

Well, SGT Boatwright, do you have anything else that I should have asked you about?

No, that's pretty much it. That's all I can really think of.

All right, then this concludes the interview. Thank you.

(The interview was concluded.)