

UNITED STATES ARMY
CENTER OF MILITARY HISTORY

INTERVIEW OF

[REDACTED]

NEIT 515

CONDUCTED BY

[REDACTED]

The Center of Military History

AT

The Pentagon

January 28, 2002

TAPE TRANSCRIPTION

1 PROCEEDINGS

2 [REDACTED] Today is 28 January 2002. My name is [REDACTED]

3 [REDACTED] This is an oral history interview. This
4 interview is unclassified.

5 If you would for me, ma'am, would you state your
6 name and organization?

7 [REDACTED] with the Office of the
8 Deputy Chief of Staff for Intelligence, Intelligence
9 Personnel Management Office.

10 [REDACTED] Okay. Thank you. And are you doing this
11 interview voluntarily?

12 [REDACTED] Yes, I am.

13 [REDACTED] Do you agree to grant access to the Center
14 for Military History to use this material in their
15 publications, provided that they quote you accurately?

16 [REDACTED] Yes, I do.

17 [REDACTED] Great. Can you give us a little bit of
18 background about how long you've been working here, working
19 for the government in the D.C. area, a little bit about that?

20 [REDACTED] Okay. I've worked for this particular
21 organization for almost 14 years. We have been actually in

1 this physical location for the last four-and-a-half -- three-
2 and-a-half, four years.

3 [REDACTED] Three-and-a-half years here?

4 [REDACTED] In this physical location. The
5 organization has moved in different buildings.

6 [REDACTED] Okay. So you've been in the same office?

7 [REDACTED] Suite, yes, of offices.

8 [REDACTED] All right. And you're part of the, for the
9 -- DCSINT is the personnel side, personnel management; is
10 that correct?

11 [REDACTED] Yes. We deal with civilian personnel
12 management policy.

13 [REDACTED] Okay. Great. Now, do you have family
14 here, children, husband?

15 [REDACTED] Yes.

16 [REDACTED] Everybody is here?

17 [REDACTED] Yeah, everybody's here.

18 [REDACTED] Okay. Great.

19 So could you give us a little background on September
20 11th, how your day started, when you heard, you know, learned
21 about the Trade Center and that sort of thing?

1 [REDACTED] Well, the day started off like any other
2 pretty much. I got up, did my normal routines. I recognized
3 that, in fact, it was my birthday and got to work on my
4 normal time.

5 Shortly after we got settled for the morning we heard
6 about one tower being hit in New York. So we were trying to
7 pull up the images on our computer and then we heard about
8 the second tower being hit.

9 Just at that time, because I have a bay window where my
10 office is, I stood up and looked out the window and I was
11 saying a prayer that nothing should ever hit this building.
12 And as soon as I said that I saw an American Airlines flight,
13 the plane, coming in around to the right, and instead of its
14 normal acceleration to go upward, you know like you're taking
15 off on a plane, it was increasing in speed.

16 So I sat here and I followed it and I watched this
17 plane. And I'm leaning towards my window watching this plane
18 and then I see the explosion.

19 And I had a co-worker behind me and she -- and as this
20 plane is going I'm saying, "Oh, Lord, please don't tell me
21 I'm seeing what I'm seeing." And she thought I meant what
22 was going on with the World Trade Centers.

1 So when the plane hit I told her, I said, "There was an
2 American Airlines." I said, "That plane just hit something."

3

4 And when she came to the window and she looked she said,
5 "That plane hit the Pentagon."

6 So by that time I'm, you know, not sure what to do, in
7 hysterics, and that's when we find out. I turned on my
8 radio. People were saying, you know, speculating what
9 airlines it was, what it hit, what it was, and I kept telling
10 people in the office, "No, it's American Airlines." I said,
11 "That plane deliberately hit the Pentagon."

12 So by that time the rest of the staff, everybody was
13 just not sure what to do at that point. We again listened to
14 CNN, we called the front office, our front local office where
15 our generals are, and made sure everybody was okay and we
16 would be able to account for everybody.

17 And I looked out the window over the next several hours
18 and it's just total gridlock. You know, you go outside and
19 you hear the sirens, everybody trying to get there.

20 People are trying to escape. People are abandoning
21 their cars, because they just can't go anywhere in the
22 traffic, because Route 1 is right here in front of our

1 window.

2 So, well, we decide okay, let's see what's going to
3 happen, and we were discussing things in the office and --
4 because of just, I guess human intuition we said this is not
5 the last one. And that's when the one in Pennsylvania
6 crashed.

7 So then after that we said okay, well, what do we do? I
8 mean, is the government officially shut down? Where do we
9 go? We heard that the Metro was shut down.

10 So basically at that point I had to make sure my family
11 was okay. My daughter, I found out my daughter was secured.

12 So we at this point was able to say, okay, well, let's just
13 pause, let's see what's going to happen, and we continued to
14 listen to the radio reports and the CNN reports.

15 And then we got the word that we were released, we could
16 go ahead and go home. So about 2:00 that afternoon we were
17 able to leave.

18 So that's how my day started. I made it home later on
19 that evening and everybody was okay.

20 ██████████ So let's orient -- you're standing here,
21 facing out of your window from your desk to the right would
22 be the Pentagon?

1 [REDACTED] Yes.

2 [REDACTED] Because you were looking up from your desk
3 in front of this window -- would it be a normal thing for you
4 to see planes? I mean --

5 [REDACTED] Not in that pattern.

6 [REDACTED] Not in that pattern.

7 [REDACTED] No.

8 [REDACTED] But would you normally see planes flying --

9 [REDACTED] Yes.

10 [REDACTED] -- out the window, that you'd be seeing
11 them either going up or coming --

12 [REDACTED] Yes.

13 [REDACTED] -- down the other way or something?

14 [REDACTED] Yes.

15 [REDACTED] But not that low, not that --

16 [REDACTED]: Not that quickly.

17 [REDACTED] So you knew automatically that something
18 was wrong.

19 Now, when you knew they hit something did you hear and
20 feel an explosion or was it just -- did you see the flames?
21 How did you know that that plane exploded?

1 [REDACTED] Well, as I was leaning towards the window -
2 - again, my window faces west, north westward, and like you
3 indicated I'm used to seeing, I guess they call it the tail
4 watch from the planes up in the sky. I'm used to seeing them
5 in all different directions.

6 But what caught my specific attention was the fact that
7 the plane was coming in an unusual pattern. Planes don't
8 normally fly in the pattern that it was flying. As I was
9 following the descension of this plane and I looked, it
10 disappeared below the skyline because there's tall buildings
11 right there where I guess Crystal City is along the freeway.

12
13 And as it disappeared it was as if time stood still. It
14 was -- I'd say within three seconds you just saw it. It was
15 like a ball of red, of orange, of black. It was just like in
16 the movies. It was slow motion and it all just rolled into
17 one big ball.

18 And my immediate thought was it hit the freeway, because
19 I couldn't judge how far it was around the building. And
20 again, I mean, it just all -- it went from red to orange to
21 black all in one huge explosion.

22 [REDACTED] And you described that you could see from

1 your window, you know, gridlock, cars not moving and
2 everything. What else -- what other senses were being
3 invaded at that time? Were there just sirens almost
4 immediately after you heard that?

5 [REDACTED]: Sirens, yes.

6 [REDACTED] Could you see a lot of smoke from where you
7 were?

8 [REDACTED] I could see a tremendous amount of smoke.
9 Actually what I did is after that particular explosion
10 happened, and I was trying to tell people on the floor that
11 something had hit in that direction, I decided to leave the
12 building.

13 So I got out of the building and I went to the back of
14 the building, and it's by that time that the sirens were
15 coming up Route 1 and they were in all directions. People
16 were -- it was almost like disbelief, like an euphoria I
17 guess. Is that the word I'm looking for?

18 On one hand they couldn't believe something had actually
19 hit the Pentagon. It was concern, it was terror -- people
20 weren't sure, the people that were around the building. So
21 that's pretty much the reaction, the sense of people, and
22 really not sure what to do, where to go at that point.

1 [REDACTED] It seems like you're in a fairly secure
2 building, but when this happened did they kind of lock
3 everybody, lock everyone down as far as not letting people
4 off the street just walk in? Has it always been as secure as
5 it is today, I mean as far as showing of the ID or whatever
6 to get in?

7 [REDACTED] Yes.

8 [REDACTED] It's always been like that even before
9 9/11?

10 [REDACTED] The security has always been that way, yes.
11 But as far as shutting down or limiting entrances and exits
12 that day, no. It was business as usual.

13 [REDACTED] What about reviewing -- just for your
14 building here or your office, did anybody say, okay, this
15 might not be the last attack let's all, you know, look at our
16 own evacuation plan or, you know, was there any concern for
17 another attack like on this building or was that ever brought
18 up? Do we do anything different than we normally would have?

19 I mean, the whole day was obviously different but --

20 [REDACTED] Right.

21 [REDACTED] -- as far as security, you know, look at

1 the exits or remind people how to get out just in case there
2 was another attack?

3 [REDACTED] No. I mean, there was no organizational or
4 mission directed action. It was just individual co-workers
5 talking and speculating. I don't think that -- no, we did
6 not look at our own evacuation plans or to make a decision to
7 evacuate. We wanted to find the -- get the direction from
8 our leadership and so we did, until we received our
9 instructions.

10 [REDACTED] When y'all left at 2:00 was it with
11 instructions to stay home the next day too, or were you all
12 planning on being back to work the next day, or how did that
13 work? Did you have a couple of days off after that or --

14 [REDACTED] No. We came back to work.

15 [REDACTED] The next day?

16 [REDACTED] Yes.

17 [REDACTED]: And do you commute or drive your car?

18 [REDACTED] Commute.

19 [REDACTED] Metro or whatever? What was that like the
20 next day?

21 [REDACTED] Actually I drove the following two weeks.

1 The way I commute, they shut down all of the transitional
2 points at the Pentagon, because I come in from the Manassas
3 area and transition at the Pentagon. So they shut all that
4 down, and until they reordered that or re-designated areas I
5 chose to drive in so -- because I knew how to get from point
6 A to point B and I had parking.

7 [REDACTED] All right. Tell me how you felt the next
8 time you saw an airplane after the skylines were shut down
9 for so long? What did you do the first plane you saw? How
10 did you feel?

11 [REDACTED] Actually the first plane I saw was that
12 evening. A couple of -- actually it wasn't that evening it
13 was later on the next night. I believe it was over my home
14 because my home is in a flight pattern with Dulles.

15 And I felt -- I felt proud, I guess, that we
16 continued. I was happy to see the planes fly again. It was
17 kind of being defiant I guess, a sense of being proud and
18 defiant.

19 [REDACTED] What was your family's reaction?

20 [REDACTED] Well, as a matter fact my father and my
21 mother picked me up from the Metro when I finally made it to
22 a Metro station, and my father just simply said, "Well, they

1 will now know what it's like to wake a sleeping dog." And
2 then the next thing he said is, he looked at me and he said,
3 "Happy birthday."

4 [REDACTED] Oh, that's right. Well, with all this I
5 had forgotten it was your birthday. I remember you said
6 that.

7 [REDACTED] Yeah.

8 [REDACTED] Did you remember all day it was your
9 birthday or did you like, okay, besides never forgetting this
10 day I am never going to forget this day?

11 [REDACTED] Yeah, that was my first thought. I will
12 never forget this birthday. That was the -- yeah, every
13 time, you know, it used to be, oh, it's my birthday. Now
14 it's a little different.

15 [REDACTED] How old are your children?

16 [REDACTED] Seven. I only have one. She's seven, a
17 seven year old.

18 [REDACTED]: Now, she was in school?

19 [REDACTED] Yes.

20 [REDACTED] Did they -- some of the schools I've heard
21 during interviews shut down -- the kids knew about it right

1 away, they told them, and then others didn't because they,
2 you know, didn't want to alarm kids that may have parents at
3 the Pentagon and everything.

4 What was the story at your daughter's school? Did they
5 tell them? Did she know before she got home or --

6 [REDACTED] She -- no, she did not know what had
7 happened. My next door neighbor sort of panicked and she
8 went, and snatched my daughter out of school and told me that
9 she had picked her up early. So my daughter had no idea
10 really.

11 By the time I got home, because they had been watching
12 the TV and the news reports, she had an idea of what was
13 happening and that I was okay. She had talked to her mom so
14 --

15 [REDACTED]: It almost seems like -- I'm trying to put
16 myself in your position, that just by the fact that I saw it,
17 and I saw it, you know, maybe one of the last people that
18 actually -- one of the few people that actually saw the plane
19 before it hit, did it almost give you a special connection
20 with those people on the plane? Do you feel that? Do you
21 feel there's something special there --

22 [REDACTED] I did.

1 [REDACTED] -- that the rest of don't have because we
2 didn't see that plane?

3 [REDACTED] Right. It's almost like -- a couple of
4 things. One, you're angry because you can't stop it. You
5 see it about to happen, but there's nothing you can do about
6 it. You wonder what they're going through.

7 That was my first thought, was that there was souls on
8 that plane. Even if it wasn't an attack, you know, even if
9 it was just a, perhaps a malfunction of the airlines, I
10 always think about the souls on that plane.

11 And then, too, when I flew for the first time in
12 October, my entire flight I thought about them, trying to put
13 myself in their shoes. So there will always be I think that
14 kindred to those people and who they were.

15 [REDACTED] When did you -- did you see the damage at
16 the Pentagon shortly after that?

17 [REDACTED] I've never seen it.

18 [REDACTED] You still haven't?

19 [REDACTED] Well, it's not there anymore (inaudible).
20 Surprisingly that's the same location we were at three years
21 ago, before we moved here.

1 [REDACTED] That part of the building was where you
2 were?

3 [REDACTED] Yes.

4 [REDACTED] So it's all, you know it's -- that could
5 have been you.

6 [REDACTED] Yes, it could have. Yes, it could have.

7 [REDACTED] It's hard not to think about things like
8 that.

9 [REDACTED] Yeah, it was by the grace of God we weren't
10 there.

11 [REDACTED] We are where we are.

12 [REDACTED] Yeah. And then we found out that a person
13 that we'd worked with was there. He was with General Maude.

14 I found out through my mother and her relations with people,
15 a couple of other people that were there that passed.

16 [REDACTED] Is it -- obviously there's been some
17 changes to you personally from you just going through this
18 experience. What's the biggest thing that you feel different
19 now than you did maybe September 9th? Is there anything that
20 stands out as you didn't feel that way on September 9th and
21 now you do, or something that you changed your mind about, or

1 are you just more huggy with your daughter and --

2 [REDACTED] Oh, no, that's always been. I guess the --
3 I guess what's the word, complacent, is no longer there. I'm
4 much more aware that this is reality.

5 There are true haters of America in this world. That
6 has changed for me. The business that we do, the
7 organization that I work for, our mission to me is much more
8 important, even though I deal with civilian personnel policy.

9 The policy stems from bringing people on board that have the
10 skills to do what it is we need to do in our business.

11 So the work that I do, sometimes you think, oh, what
12 difference does it make. Well, it does because it can bring
13 the people on board perhaps to anticipate or to help deter
14 some of these things.

15 [REDACTED] That's all my questions. I just feel like
16 I've been blessed hearing your extraordinary story. Is there
17 anything you want to add that's on your mind or you think is
18 important to capture in the history of your experience that
19 day or your thoughts later or --

20 [REDACTED] No. I just find words that -- like you
21 said hugging my daughter. For every individual, regardless
22 of what they do, to look at each day as its day. To enjoy as

1 much as you can out of that day and to be a little bit more
2 tolerant of other people and all of our diversities and our
3 differences.

4 [REDACTED] So inspiring. Thank you very, very much.

5 [REDACTED] You're welcome.

6 [REDACTED] I appreciate it. It's been a pleasure.

7 [REDACTED] For me too.

8 (The interview was concluded.)

9 * * * * *