

Interview with Director John Jester  
January 31, 2006  
Final

Putney: This is an oral history interview with Pentagon Force Protection Agency (PFPA) Director John Jester. The interviewer is Diane Putney and takes place in the Pentagon on January 31, 2006.

All of these questions pertain to the Defense Protective Service (DPS)\* and the 2001 time frame, so even if I speak in the present term I am really referring to your activity as chief of DPS. Now you are the director?

Jester: Yes, but everyone still calls me chief.

Putney: I realize that the Pentagon does not have its own fire department, but relies on the Arlington County Fire Department. Whose responsibility was it in the Pentagon in 2001 and before that to call the Arlington County Fire Department? Does the DPS security officer first check out the incident, confirm that something is going on, and then radio for a call to the fire department? Could you explain the relationship between DPS and the fire department for this building?

Jester: At the time of the incident, if, for example, the fire alarm was activated, we would automatically call the fire department, because you can't delay to wait for an officer to check something out. Minutes, in this kind of situation, could allow time for the fire to grow and endanger more people. So we would immediately call the fire department and also send police officers to the scene to observe what was going on there. They would also meet the fire department as it arrives on the reservation and take them to the scene of the fire. They would verify if there was only smoke, but no fire, or if there was a fire they would extinguish it and give the all clear. It was and is our responsibility to maintain that contact with the fire

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\* PFPA succeeded the DPS after the 9/11 attacks.

department. We had a direct telephone line to the Arlington County dispatcher—still do. They dispatch a truck from Station 105, which is the station nearest the Pentagon.

Putney: When the fire alarm goes off—is it a smoke detector connected to your Communications Center?

Jester: Yes. (Except in the Joint Staff area.) (Separate system.)

Putney: Where does that alarm register?

Jester: In our Communications Center.

Putney: Would you say that is your hub, or focus?

Jester: That's our bellybutton, everything focuses there, that's where we receive all the emergency telephone calls from employees in the building, and where we dispatch the appropriate response, whether it be police officers, fire, or emergency medical. They are also the ones who contact the fire department or any other necessary persons for the quick response. It's like a 911 center, the same concept.

Putney: Is or was there a written agreement with the Arlington County Fire Department and the Pentagon, or WHS [Washington Headquarters Service]?

Jester: Many years ago, but it was not a written agreement. We are located in Arlington County, so they have always been—as far as I know—the fire and emergency medical support for the Pentagon. They have been serving us for quite some time. Starting in 1998, when the Sarin gas was introduced into the subways in Tokyo, we started looking into what we would do in this kind of event and what support we could receive. From that we developed a good working relationship with the Arlington County Fire Department, and I was on a first name basis with the chief and assistant chiefs. We developed a close relationship and began establishing joint exercises. By doing that and working together, trust developed between the two organizations,

so that when 9/11 occurred there were no questions about who was doing what. There were no turf battles. I knew [ACFD Asst. Fire Chief] Jim Schwartz, the incident commander. They had educated us about what's called the incident command system, so when that event occurred we all knew that he was the incident commander, and we all supported him. We were at ease working with one another. The results of that were very well coordinated communications between us in terms of response. That was noted in the 9/11 Commission's report. The report discussed the coordination of the incident command system at the Pentagon as opposed to New York City, where there has been friction for many years between the police and fire departments. It worked very well here, not just with the fire department, but we had good relations with all the police departments around town, and we all knew each other, so we easily coordinated with each other.

Putney: When the fire trucks arrive, do they always come in at the same entryway, so that the DPS officers know where the fire department is?

Jester: Pretty much, because they don't know their way around the building like we do, so our officers usually meet them on the edge of the property and direct them to the appropriate location.

Putney: You meet them in a patrol car and bring them around to the incident area?

Jester: Yes.

Putney: Do you have any DPS officer assigned to be liaison with them while they are here, or [do] just the officers that investigated the incident serve as liaison?

Jester: At that time we had no liaison officers, we do now. We have a memorandum of agreement with Arlington County and now have a fire captain in our Communications Center every day. At that time we did not, but we had contact through the Arlington County emergency

operations center. On 9/11 we had the fire alarm going off, police officers actually seeing the plane crash into the building—so all those calls came into our Communications Center, and then they called the fire department, who had already seen the plane coming in. So we had it reported in many ways that day.

Putney: But definitely it is the DPS that meets the fire department and stays with the incident commander. Some DPS officers then would come into the building, or does the commander actually come into the building?

Jester: No. It depends on the incident. Usually the incident commander is back a ways, because he can't be in both places at once. The incident commander coordinates everything, not actually fighting the fire or whatever, they are coordinating the ongoing actions.

Putney: Right, command and control, like a headquarters.

Jester: Right.

Putney: So you have DPS officers with the incident commander, and some escorting the firefighters into the building.

Jester: Usually our command staff will coordinate with the command staff of the fire department. That day I was coordinating with the fire chief and the assistant fire chief.

Putney: The incident commander was the senior fire official from our own county, and you would take your orders from him, is that right?

Jester: For anything involving that event. It would be the incident commander for that incident. The initial part of the terrorist attack was the explosion, fire, and rescuing people in the building. The logical commander for that is the fire department. The incident commander role will change as the event goes on. Once the fire was out, and all possible rescues accomplished, at that point the incident commander role changed from the fire department to the FBI, because it was a crime

scene. We (DPS) secured the crime scene for the FBI, and their technicians went in and did all their duties—photography, locate bodies, identify bodies, and prepare for a criminal case in court. So it went from the incident command of the fire department to that of the FBI, who took it over for some weeks, to us, and we gave the building back to WHS to fix up.

Putney: The Arlington County Police Department has jurisdiction around the Pentagon Reservation, but not on the reservation, so the Arlington County Fire Department has a lot more responsibility than the Arlington County Police Department for the building here and the reservation. You are the key security official on the site, so when all the other jurisdictions send police officers here are they supposed to check in with you, or DPS personnel? You, then, as chief of DPS are the lead security official, is that correct?

Jester: Yes. What happened on 9/11 is that we were securing the perimeter of the building, the site of the terrorist attack as well as maintaining our regular security and additional security around the outside. What the Arlington County Police Department did was to put a perimeter around the entire reservation to assist us, along with the Virginia State Police. Arlington County Police have an MOU [Memorandum of Understanding] with all the other police departments in the area, and they called for assistance from police departments from the metropolitan area. We received police officers from Prince William County, PG [Prince George's] County, and from DC. They established a perimeter around the reservation to assist us. On September 12 the first military troops arrived, the Maryland National Guard MPs, and set up a series of support troop units that came to the Pentagon for a two-year period. It included active duty initially, then National Guard and Reservists, military police units.

Putney: Did you say two years?

Jester: Yes, it was quite some time, and it allowed the Pentagon Force Protection Agency (PFPA) to create a new organization. We (DPS initially) had 275 or so police officers on duty on that day; now PFPA has over 500. During the last four years we have been hiring police officers. Having the MPs here allowed PFPA to recruit new officers and when we reached a certain number the MPs would no longer be needed. As PFPA got larger, the MPs got smaller.

Putney: Because it was a terrorist attack the FBI got involved. Did you have much interaction with the FBI before 9/11, were there other incidents, and did you know the FBI agents?

Jester: Yes, we had working relationships with the FBI, we had been working with them on concern for WMD for some time. We knew many of the agents by first names, because we worked with them on small projects as well as any criminal actions happening here. I knew most of the agents when they arrived. Again, that eased working relationships.

Putney: If there is a crime, because this is federal property, the FBI gets involved, too?

Jester: Yes. It depends on the nature of the crime, the seriousness of it, the dollar value. Most crimes that occur are property crimes, the FBI did not get involved. Our criminal investigators investigate those crimes and submit the cases to the U.S. Attorney's office for prosecution. If it is a major case, a shooting or such, the FBI will respond and take jurisdiction for that particular crime. Most crimes we investigate, but in some cases the FBI will come in.

Putney: We are so close to National Airport, you were thinking of the possibility of a plane hitting the building. In 2000 there actually was a command post exercise where someone came here from Pennsylvania with a model of the Pentagon. Could you elaborate a bit on that scenario?

Jester: We had been having a trainer conduct different studies for various events, and I suggested conducting an exercise involving a plane, because we are so close to the airport. The

scenario was to have a small plane crash into the roof of the building. We practiced that in October 2000, I believe.

Putney: Was it a commuter plane, or a private one?

Jester: It was actually a small Cessna-size plane. We thought maybe that would be the kind of plane that might attack the building by throwing something on the roof, never dreaming an airliner would be used as a bomb. We were always concerned that a plane would crash here on takeoff or landing because we are in line with Runway 15. We did that drill. I remember on 9/11 sometime during that day my mind flashed back to that command post exercise and thinking that there was no way that it represented the scope of what we were facing.

Putney: A command post would just involve people in that Communications Center? Where did it occur, where does the command post exercise take place?

Jester: That one actually took place down in 1E801, the old conference room area. Now our exercises are on a much grander scope. We had other exercises before, but now we have a series of what we call "Gallant Fox" exercises, where we do different scenarios each year. Now we even have Autumn Fox exercise in the fall to deal with the consequences from the Gallant Fox exercise. Last year we had some 14 agencies participating. It is not just us here in the Pentagon, it involves Arlington County, DHS, EPA, Virginia State Police, and many agencies around the entire metro area.

Putney: At that time did you have Arlington officials, or was it just Pentagon officials?

Jester: It was just us.

Putney: He feeds you the scenario and you have to react in the conference room?

Jester: Yes.

Putney: Does it take a day, or a morning, or a few hours?

Jester: It was pretty much an all day kind of thing.

Putney: That was in October?

Jester: I believe it was October of 2000.

Putney: Who was your immediate supervisor then?

Jester: Doc [David O.] Cooke. No, at that time my immediate supervisor was Paul Haselbush, director of Real Estate and Facilities. My second level supervisor was Doc.

Putney: DPS was part of RE&F?

Jester: Yes.

Putney: Within DPS you had two deputy chiefs, Enoch Williams and John Pugrud?

Jester: Right.

Putney: If you are not here, which one becomes the acting chief?

Jester: Primarily, at that time, Pugrud did.

Putney: But you had two deputy chiefs, and then you went through Haselbush to Doc Cooke.

Jester: Right.

Putney: Doc would keep the Secretary's office informed more often than not.

Jester: Right.

Putney: Do you remember Mr. Williams being here that day? We didn't interview him.

Jester: I don't recall if he was on duty that day, I want to say he was not. He was here later, but whether he was here when it occurred, I can't recall.

Putney: When DPS officers are safeguarding the Pentagon, some are at stationary sites checking us as we come into the building, but are some also patrolling the building?

Jester: Yes.



Putney: That morning you might not have known exactly where everyone was. Did they have radios, and were they checking in with the comm center, and could they talk to each other?

Jester: Yes, they have a radio network, and they can talk to each other or the command center. That's how the first people saw the plane; a patrolman called the Communications Center that he saw a plane coming down into the building.

Putney: So that is, as you mentioned, your bellybutton, all the information is there. As more police officers arrive on scene from other jurisdictions, and they have radios, does that affect the ability of your own people to communicate with each other on their radios?

Jester: No, they are on different frequencies. Arlington County brought over their own mobile command post, which we set up at the underpass of 395, that's where we were initially coordinating the overall outside activities of all supporting organizations.\* Then it got more formalized. We had the mobile command post, and we had incident command down at the Heliport, and later that night we set up a JOC, Joint Operations Center, at Fort Myer, to deal with all the outside phone calls so they wouldn't interfere with the incident command focusing on the event.

Putney: Throughout that day, your officers are able to keep in contact with each other and feed things into the comm center, so you have a good feel for what's going on from your force?

Jester: Yes.

Putney: The evacuation of the building—is it DPS's responsibility, if there is an evacuation, to make sure it happens?

Jester: Yes.

Putney: What do you have to do to make people aware that they should leave the building?

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\* Where ACFD Chief Schwartz, the Incident Commander, was located.

Jester: We had installed a speaker system throughout the building. Some parts were not yet installed because of planned renovations in the building, but we basically make an announcement on the PA system. At that time, it wasn't the best system, the quality of the speakers was not very good. Now with the new system you can hear things very clearly. We had what's called the "Giant Voice" system. Plus, police officers were in the areas closest to where the attack occurred and were telling people to get out, plus the fire alarms were going off.

Putney: Did the fire alarms go off automatically, or did your people have to do something?

Jester: There are different kinds, but these went off automatically, because of the fire.

Putney: They detected the heat and smoke; did they give a ringing sound of some sort?

Jester: Yes, except in some parts of the building where the fire burned through the wires.

Putney: Where is the Giant Voice system activated and who might be speaking?

Jester: Our communications supervisor, Captain Mike Nesbitt, was making the announcements.

Putney: Do you have to tell him to do that, or does he do it on his own?

Jester: He does it on his own.

Putney: Do you remember what he said?

Jester: No.

Putney: And you definitely wanted the whole building evacuated, except for the Secretary?

Jester: The Ops Center, yes.

Putney: Most of the regular workers needed to get out of the building.

Jester: Yes.

Putney: There was some confusion; people thought that the full evacuation was because of the second plane that was believed to be coming to the area.

Jester: No. That was later. We had the building on fire, smoke spreading through the building; it was mainly because of that.

Putney: The alarms near the site and Big Voice—are there other alarms that can be manually turned on in other parts of the building but not near the site? Could someone in the 10th Corridor hear the Big Voice or do they need someone knocking on the door?

Jester: Yes, they could hear Big Voice.

Putney: Was the Big Voice the main way to get the word out quickly?

Jester: Back then it was. Now we have more than one way. Now we have Big Voice and what we call CENS, the computer emergency network system.

Putney: We get those in Rosslyn, too. They are very helpful.

Jester: When you have a real big emergency it knocks everything else off the computer with a big red banner and a siren.

Putney: Your people would have known to go and knock on doors? Did they do that?

Jester: Yes.

Putney: You have a situation where you are trying to secure the building and at the same time trying to empty it. Was there confusion about trying to lock down some doors while people were trying to get out?

Jester: You do the best you can to keep people from coming in and everybody going out. In that situation you have people flying out of the building and a lot of things going on. But yes, you secure the building, let people out, but don't let people back in.

Putney: Could you have heard this Giant Voice in Wedge 1, the newly renovated wedge?

Jester: I don't know for sure.

Putney: Would Wedge 1 have had anything different from the other wedges?

Jester: Wedge 1 had a new fire alarm system in there, and I don't know if Giant Voice was hooked up to it or not. It might have been, but the bulk of Wedge 1 was affected. I was in Wedge 5 and my office shook. Everybody saw the smoke and the fire going over the building. There was no doubt we had a major problem.

Putney: Would you describe what you were doing that morning? How did you learn about the attacks on the World Trade Centers and what did you do from that time to the time the plane hit and after?

Jester: I received a call from Glenn Flood, in Public Affairs. Glenn and I talked quite frequently during the year. He called me shortly after the first building was hit and asked me what I was doing because of what was happening. He told me about the first attack. I turned my office TV on and saw the second tower being hit. We knew it was a terrorist attack, and so we raised our threat level to Force Condition Alpha, one step up from our normal. We put more police officers on the outside to be alert to what might occur. I talked to Paul Haselbush and Doc, and we were wondering if something would happen in Washington. I thought it was probably a New York thing and would not happen down here. That was my first lesson from 9/11.

Putney: You left your office?

Jester: Yes, I went to talk to Paul and Doc and had just gotten back to my office in the A Ring, and was in the doorway, when I felt the shaking of the windows and light fixtures. Rich Dooley was at the window and saw the smoke and said we'd been hit.

Putney: You saw from the window that something was there.

Jester: Yes, not to what extent, but I saw smoke going over the building. I immediately ran down to the Operations Center to assess what was going on.

Putney: Is that the Comm Center?

Jester: Yes. It only took me a minute, but during that minute everything happened at once. The alarms went off, the phones were ringing, they were on the radio, medivac support was called for, they were doing a fantastic job getting everything lined up ready to go. I yelled to Mike to show me a camera on the Heliport, and he found it was blown up. We lost our connection with the cameras on the west side of the building.

Putney: Did they actually get destroyed or just the connectivity?

Jester: Just the connectivity. We had installed cameras at different booths around the building. We had one down at the Mall Entrance. We had a camera installed to read license plates. We had just installed a digital recording system, versus VCRs, testing it to see how it worked. We don't know how, but somebody had turned the camera toward the Heliport, and we actually caught the plane going in, it was just a blur. You can see a bit of tail, a plane sliding across the ground and a huge explosion.

Putney: Did you see that film that day or later?

Jester: I saw it that night or the next morning. The FBI asked what we had on camera and we checked our cameras.

Putney: Down where everything was happening, did you see anything on camera indicating fire right at your building?

Jester: I think so, we had smoke everywhere. It was obvious.

Putney: And also maybe damage.

Jester: You couldn't get a good perspective at the time, I needed to go outside and observe. I ran around the A-E Drive, and there was smoke, fire, and water covering the roadway. I tried to go into the building, but it was just too hot. People were yelling that the windows were getting ready to blow out. I saw the hole where the front of the plane punched in the inside wall of the C

Ring; it knocked some bricks out. I didn't realize that it had been done by the plane, I thought it was due to the renovation. Eventually I got out to the site itself, to the Heliport, and could see the extent of it. It took at least a half hour, because the floors had fallen by the time I got there. My role in that event was to coordinate things. I was trying to spend more time in the comm center getting things done, but finally I needed to get a good view of what was going on.

Putney: People were trying to get fire extinguishers. Did you see anyone find any?

Jester: Yes. That's what they were yelling to me, because the extinguishers weren't in the hallways. We found a cache of them down in the RDF, and they brought them here by car.

Putney: Did you see anyone actually using one? Was it possible to use against that kind of flame?

Jester: Not really. The smoke was so bad you couldn't see, and the heat was so bad. Some people were trying to save people, but as time went by there was thousands of gallons of aviation fuel on fire in the hallways. When the plane hit, there was a trailer outside the building that held a temporary generator. The right wing bent the metal of the trailer and caused the first fire explosion. Then, as it went in the building a lot of the fuel it was carrying exploded outside, but some of it sprayed horizontally down the hallways. I met Army Lt. Col. Brian Birdwell, who's written a book. We were both going down to New Orleans for DoD to speak at a conference. The two of us and a sergeant were all sitting together and found out we were all going to the same place for DoD. Fortunately, on 9/11 Brian had gone to the men's room in Wedge 1. His office was where the plane hit. When he came out a fireball hit him in the hallway. A sprinkler put him out. There were sprinklers in that part of the building, unlike the old part.

Putney: Did you stay in A-E Drive, or did you go back to the comm center to report what you saw?

Jester: I started at the comm center, went to A-E Drive, may have come back, went to the Heliport area, and stayed there quite a while trying to coordinate with the fire departments and people on the scene about what we needed to do to coordinate activities and get things in terms of support. At some point I spent most of the afternoon at the site between the incident command post on the ground itself and then over to the Arlington County Police Departments' mobile command post.

Putney: When you are at the Heliport, you are looking at the crash site, were you also looking for the incident commander?

Jester: I hooked up with him right away.

Putney: So he [Schwartz] hadn't gone over to 395 yet. Did you go with him?

Jester: We were back and forth. At some point he settled on the ground itself, but there was a while when we had a concern for a second plane inbound and spent time at the underpass. We were outside and heard the fire trucks blowing their horns. Upon asking why, they said it was for recall, to come down off the building because of a report of a second plane inbound. So they pulled the firemen off the building for a while. We all pulled back until we got word it was not a hostile aircraft, but some FEMA plane; because we had had the report of Flight 93 coming towards Washington.

Putney: The Flight 93 that crashed in Pennsylvania was early on, around the time of the collapse. Were you there on the west side for that initial pull away when you think of a hijack?

Jester: We just heard of a second inbound plane. I didn't know of Flight 93 at all. In fact, I didn't know that the World Trade Towers had fallen until about 6:00 that night.

Putney: You met up with Schwartz, was [ACFD Fire Chief Edward] Plaughter there?

Jester: I think Plaughter was there, yes.

Putney: You were with both of them when you first went out to the west side, and you moved over eventually to the underpass.

Jester: Yes.

Putney: That was because of the plane coming in?

Jester: The FBI had told the Arlington County Fire that there was a second plane coming in, and they pulled their men off the roof.

Putney: Your security police were telling people to get away from the building.

Jester: There were a lot of people in the South Parking lot, and we told them to go further away from the building. They went over towards the highway and the underpasses.

Putney: Were you communicating with your security police to tell them to do that or were they doing that automatically.

Jester: They just did it.

Putney: And you yourselves moved away to the underpass. You are with the incident command post and when it moves you moved with it. Then the Arlington police set up over there?

Jester: They brought a mobile command post over there at some point.

Putney: How long were you at the underpass?

Jester: A few hours, we were going back and forth. I actually spent more time on the field site, staying there until about 5:00 p.m. At some point I met with Jim Schwartz later in the afternoon and we talked about long term command and control. We were exercising ICS and they had FEMA coming over, and he asked for a meeting site. I arranged to use the public affairs studio. We met about 5:00 or 6:00 in that studio and talked about what to do down the road and how we would set up the incident command systems. FEMA was there, they said they had called in search and rescue teams from around the country. It was initially a coordination meeting. We



also agreed to set up a Joint Operations Center. It was ironic that the following week was supposed to be the World Bank meetings in D.C. The FBI was preparing for demonstrations like ones in the past, so they had acquired use of the recreation center at Fort Myer to use as a joint operations center for that demonstration. They had all this equipment standing by, even a JOC pass made up with a picture of the World Bank on it. We used that for the JOC. I found mine the other day. It was supposed to be set up by midnight, but it was about 5:00 a.m. before it actually got set up. I stayed here, and after the meeting we went our separate ways. I met with my staff. We had arranged for people to be here around the clock, and John Pugrud said he would stay so I could go home and clean up and change and come back to work. I went home about 3:00 or 4:00 a.m.

Putney: The JOC meeting in the building, was that the one that Doc Cooke and Maj. Gen. Jackson from the Military District of Washington started off, and there was a discussion among all the first responders?

Jester: I don't know if Doc was there; I don't think Jackson was there, either. This was basically a meeting of the first responders. I don't recall all who were there, but it was about how command was to be exercised through the event. The FBI, Arlington, and others were there, but I can't recall who all was there.

Putney: When you were under 395, going back and forth to the Heliport, did you come into the building, possibly to talk to Doc or Haselbush? Haselbush was at his own alternate command center.

Jester: I did at some point. Paul had moved out of the building, I dealt with Doc from then on. I came back and forth, came to my office at some point to use the phone, and at some point there was too much smoke, even in our operations center, but we stayed there because it was right at

the edge of Wedge 1. We still had power so we kept that place operating even though it was smoky.

Putney: Did you have a backup at the time?

Jester: No. Now we do, we have a mobile command post; we have gotten a lot of things since then.

Putney: Did you have your radio? Could you call in to the Communications Center and stay in contact?

Jester: Yes, we had radios, and cell phones for a while, but then the cell phone service got overloaded. I lost my cell phone somewhere in the A-E Drive when I was running back and forth trying to get in to where the fire was. The next day Mike Nesbitt called AT&T and they sent over a trailer with a portable cell tower, cell phones, and the Secret Service arrived the next day with a cell tower and a whole bunch of cell phones which we passed to everybody.

Putney: At some point a sergeant from the Virginia State Police came and talked to you about closing roads. Where were you and what time was this?

Jester: Probably on the Heliport area. That was Rick Keevil. He was in charge of the Virginia State Police office on Columbia Pike, up near the Navy Annex. He came down with his troopers to help us out. Rick is now is my chief of police for the PFPA Police Directorate. Virginia State Police and Arlington Police closed Washington Boulevard.

Putney: You requested that because helicopters were landing and everything else?

Jester: It was full of fire trucks, they closed it automatically, and we needed to keep it closed because of the equipment. It was remarkable how we had a field full of equipment, and after I left and came back, around 5:00 or so, there was even more equipment. The field was full of equipment of all types.

Putney: You didn't have at that time a mobile command post. Did you get a tent, because you wanted to be out there?

Jester: We used a tent, with mobile phones strung out there, and at some point Lockheed Martin loaned us an RV, but we operated primarily out of a tent. We had several tents. There were tents all over the place.

Putney: Did the tent get set up that day, evening, or the next day?

Jester: I think at some time the next day.

Putney: What Threatcon were you at by then?

Jester: When you have a terrorist attack you go to Delta.

Putney: Were you still using Threatcon, or were you transitioning from what we have today?

Jester: I think we were using Threatcon back then. We went to Alpha before the event, and when there is an incident we go to Delta. We stayed at Delta for several weeks or so.

Putney: You called your off duty officers back in.

Jester: We started calling them plus they started coming in on their own. The next day we went to a 12-hour shift. We were on 12-hour shifts 7 days a week.

Putney: They don't keep their weapons with them when they are off duty. Was there some difficulty because the armory was near the impact site and it was difficult to get the weapons?

Jester: At the time of the event, all weapons were turned in to an armory, here on the Concourse. When some of the men came back they couldn't get to their weapons because of the smoke. We finally got back into the armory and issued everybody their weapons, and I went to Doc Cooke and told him we needed to temporarily change our policy. I advised the officers to take their weapons back and forth home, because we didn't have time to line everyone up and exchange weapons. So they started taking them home.

Putney: Did the officers have gas masks at that time, and would they have been appropriate for this kind of thing?

Jester: No, they are not equipped for smoke.

Putney: They don't have respirators and don't help at all

Jester: Nine officers and one civilian employee, Abe Diaz, a civilian contractor, won the valor award for their actions that day, going in to rescue people. We had one Air Force sergeant assigned to us, Chris Forshey, who won the Airman's medal.

Putney: Do you still have those write-ups for the medals in files somewhere?

Who might have those?

Jester: Rich Dooley might, he works for me in our HR [Human Resources] organization. I'm sure they are in their files now.

Putney: That would be useful for the historical record, to plug some of those stories in.

Jester: Essentially what they [the write-ups] say is they risked their lives by going into the building to rescue people. We got some news coverage. One of our officers, Officer [Isaac] Ho'opi'i, a Hawaiian, went in and actually was telling people "Come to my voice." He has a real deep voice. He rescued a lot of people. I saw him the next day and he was feeling bad about not being able to get all the people he could hear in his mind. I told him to think about the ones he did rescue. The next day or so there was an article about a guy in the hospital who was looking for "his angel" that helped him get out. The connections were made, and it was Ho'opi'i. They have been friends ever since. They have been on the Today show on the 9/11 anniversary, and there are articles in the papers. He is a national hero in Hawaii.

Putney: Where you concerned that the terrorists might have brought some chemicals on board, Sarin or something, and would try to attack from the outside?

Jester: Yes. We knew from the fire that everything would have been incinerated, but we were concerned about what might be next. We put an outer perimeter all around the building. We actually blocked up the parking lots and locked things down, and they have been locked down to a degree ever since then. We have never returned to the level of what we now call "Normal." We are at a higher level now, the level "Charlie." We stay there.

Putney: Who sets up that system of force protection? It seems standard, from A to D. It's not just something within the building. Is it throughout the federal government?

Jester: The federal government is different, they do the color codes. In DoD it was called Threatcon, now it is called Force Protection Con, or FP Con. It's throughout DoD. The Joint Staff sets the base levels in parts of the country, and the local commander can make it higher if he wants to. The base level for the United States is Bravo, but we are at Charlie. No, I'm sorry, we are at Bravo now.

Putney: With the JOC being set up at Fort Myer, you had people there that night. Were you over there, and did you have people there for the next week?

Jester: Weeks.

Putney: Was that a useful setup?

Jester: Yes.

Putney: You had 24-hour coverage on that?

Jester: Yes, it was a point to coordinate activities among all the organizations. It was a nice facility. The FBI had arranged for telephones previously before, preparing for the World Bank demonstration. It kept things separate, which is very important.

Putney: How did you learn that Secretary Rumsfeld wanted to open up the building to the work force on September 12th, and what was your reaction to that?

Jester: I was not surprised. It was sometime that evening, probably from Doc. I knew that what the Secretary was trying to say to the world was "you can hit us, but you can't stop us." It was difficult. The next day people came to work, and we were on fire for more than two more days. But I understood what was going on.

Putney: What kinds of things did you have to do to get things ready?

Jester: We had to screen people very tight and restrict cars; we had huge traffic jams, particularly the first day. We were backed up all over the place.

Putney: Because roads were closed to begin with.

Jester: Roads were closed, and we had to check every car coming on to the reservation, so it was backed up. I remember seeing General Jones, who was the Commandant of the Marine Corps, and I knew Jim, and he came over and said, "John you will get a lot of phone calls today." But I didn't care.

Putney: The corridors had to be blocked off, because the work force can't just wander all over.

Jester: The FBI set the limits of what they felt was the crime scene and we secured the corridors. The next day we had the MPs to assist us, and we set a perimeter around all the hallways on the inside, probably from Corridor 6 to Corridor 3, a big area.

Putney: Eventually you had wooden barriers there, but that day you had crime scene tape and guards there to keep the people out?

Jester: We had MPs there, yes.

Putney: There was some reference to people pretending that they were Red Cross people or Salvation Army people?

Jester: I was told that some people there wearing Red Cross shirts were actually photographers, so even though I did not see any myself, we had to check everybody in the area. The following

day we set up some means to identify those who should be on the scene. Initially we used arm bands, which are used in mass arrests, the color-coded arm bands to keep track of the prisoners. We used those to keep track of who was authorized to be in there. We brought a mobile badging station and started issuing a badge for the site and that got overwhelmed because it was just a single system and we had hundreds of people there by that time. The second or third day the Secret Service came over with a larger system, and the FBI had arranged for the Army Band to operate it. We set the more elaborate control system up to have an inner perimeter and outer perimeter.

Putney: You recall the bands being used on the 12th?

Jester: I think it was about the 12th.

Putney: The MPs showed up right away. Was there any reluctance to have the Army or the National Guard here at first?

Jester: No, we needed help.

Putney: You needed help, and they were available, and you used them right away.

Jester: Yes.

Putney: People reported seeing people on buildings with rifles and assumed it was kind of a SWAT team. Would DPS have had a SWAT team then?

Jester: We had one, but we were all deployed here. There were other organizations, the Virginia State Police, and probably some US Marshals, who were deployed then. At one point I think we did finally get some people on the roofs with them; I know at the Navy Annex we did.

Putney: Later?

Jester: It was probably the second day.

Putney: What about the leased facilities? You were concerned about the people in Crystal City and Rosslyn who were DoD employees. Did you also have to tighten up security there as well?

Jester: We did what we could. We had additional contract guards in all of the buildings and tried to patrol as best we could with our limited resources. We brought in additional contract security officers to all the buildings.

Putney: Is there anything else that you want to mention, that sticks out in your mind as really significant that the DPS folks did or how they acted?

Jester: I'm real proud of what they did, because at the time we had a much smaller force and we were overwhelmed. Everybody did extremely great things and worked extraordinary hours. People didn't go home sometimes for days. There were some really adverse conditions, and they did their jobs protecting this building and everything. I'm very proud of what they did. That was the basis of our new organization, and now we have a much larger force that can respond to events with greater assets. We have a lot more capabilities now with chemical, biological and radiological systems, Hazmat teams, more police officers, and more anti-terrorism people. But at the time, the guys did a great job, doing many jobs at one time.

Putney: Did you arrange to have some kind of after-action report done?

Jester: We did.

Putney: Is a copy available?

Jester: I can find you a copy. We did one, but it was a while before we did it, which was a lesson in itself. It should be done as soon as possible so you can remember more details. There was also an Arlington County After-Action Report, and our report was very similar, but with more details.



Putney: I find those helpful just for the numbers of people and organizations, things like that.

You pin it down pretty accurately, at least referencing where the statistics came from.

Jester: There were a lot of good lessons that we determined ourselves that we need to do differently. One problem in the past was not having resources to do these things. For example, that day we were looking for fire extinguishers and tools and couldn't find them. Now we have trailers we can haul inside the building as well as trailers prepositioned outside. They hold fire extinguishers, tools, hard hats, flashlights, batteries, things you never know when you will need. We decided we had to spend the resources to stock those resources, because you just don't know when something will happen in today's world. We got a mobile command post set up, we have a fall-back communications system. We have acted on all lessons learned and make a big issue about planning for emergencies, more so than we did then. We now have a good structure to deal with all these emergencies. I refocused on being prepared. I stress that. We review ourselves now and see how well prepared we are in these areas. There are a lot of things that have come out about what you can do to look at yourself and we try to take advantage of all those and ask questions about what things we should do and practice how to do them.

Putney: Does DPS provide the officers to guard the Secretary?

Jester: We have a protective services team right here in the building that takes care of the Secretary while he's here in the building doing ceremonies, or outside ceremonies. When he leaves the building, Army CID picks up on him and travels with him in town and when he goes overseas. We work with them and supply alarm systems. When he goes overseas we have a technical security team that make sure the rooms are clean of electronic bugging, and we also have a team, when he goes to certain parts of the world, to make sure there are no biological bugs, too. We do a lot more things than we did before.

Putney: Did you on that day go to his office to see your folks up there?

Jester: At one point I went to see him in the executive support center and gave him a report. He was asking how many people were dead and at the time we only had eight reported dead. I probably saw him two or three times that day and on subsequent days I had other meetings with him. That day I went to see Doc several times. Once, at 2:00 a.m., he was laid out on his sofa with his hands across his chest, very quiet. I was in constant movement. Over the successive weeks I was in constant motion, and we had a fantastic support organization in the parking lot of food, and all the things we needed. The Red Cross and the Salvation Army was there, and I was eating candy bars and sandwiches all the time, but I still lost 10 pounds. My metabolism was just strung out. I wish it would stay that way. We all lost a lot of weight. We were working 7 days a week, and I was working probably 15 hours a day. We actually served Thanksgiving dinner here for the officers and the MPs.

Putney: You were still going at the end of November.

Jester: I was going to take one weekend off. My wife came to pick me up to drive to the Eastern Shore to our home over there. I fell asleep by the time we got to the 14th Street Bridge and didn't wake up until we got there. It was a very exhausting period.

Putney: It's probably the highlight of your career.

Jester: Yes, I've been in combat in Vietnam, but this was probably the highlight.

Putney: I'm on the Pentagon master corridor committee, because they are moving exhibits around the building with the renovation. Secretary Rumsfeld wants a new humanitarian corridor. I just learned that of the tens of thousands of visitors, VIPs or not, most want to go to the 9/11 site.

Jester: Yes, it's very nice.

Putney: When you think of the Pentagon now you think of that.

Jester: There is a chapel in the Navy room; it's a very powerful room. It's very quiet.

Putney: If we could get a copy of that after-action report it would help us a great deal.

Jester: I will see if I can find a copy.

Putney: And if you can call Rich Dooley that I would like to get those write-ups for the citations for the Medal of Valor, that would be very useful too. Thank you very much for your time. I know you are wrapping things up. We appreciate it.