

Interview with Captain Michael Nesbitt
June 19, 2006
Final

Putney: This is an oral history interview with Captain Michael Nesbitt of the Pentagon Force Protection Agency. It is June 19, 2006, and we are at the Pentagon. The interviewer is Diane

Putney: Captain Nesbitt, on September 11, 2001, what was your rank, and what was your job, or position, with the Defense Protective Service (DPS)?

Nesbitt: I was a lieutenant with the DPS in the Records Communications Center. Capt. Jerry Maryott was overall in charge of the Center, but I pretty much ran the day to day operations of the DPS Records Communications Center at the time.

Putney: Most of my questions will pertain to 2001 or the period before that. What procedures did DPS follow to get everybody to evacuate the building quickly right after the plane hit? How does DPS run an evacuation?

Nesbitt: That was an interesting moment in life. Actually, I was supposed to be going to help Lieutenant Stout, now Major Stout. He was at home in Falls Church pouring a concrete slab under his deck, and I had promised him I'd be there by about 10:00 a.m. The configuration of this office is different now, but one of my employees, Officer Jesse Devaughn, was rapping on a window that I could see from my vantage point in the old center, and he was yelling about something going on in New York, and I should turn on the TV. The TV was in our Emergency Operations Center at the time, which was part of the OCC (Operation Communication Center). I turned the TV on and I could see one of the towers burning, and I thought someone had been flying into La Guardia or something and had messed up, like back in 1945 when the B-25 hit the Empire State Building. All of a sudden as I was standing there with two other officers, the second jet hit the South Tower. I thought, that was no mistake—that was deliberate.

I got hold of Chief [John] Jester and told him about the incident, and he knew about it. He said to send an e-mail to the Real Estate and Facilities Division, which was only about 1,200 people. Since then they (DynCorp, I think) have come up with a way to reach all unclassified servers to send out a broad e-mail. I was actually one of the first to set that up afterwards. I sent out an e-mail based on one I had just received from Army HQ at Fort McNair. Bill Stout called me up asking me why I wasn't there to help him. I said I was on my way.

I had just sent the e-mail and all of a sudden the wall shook. My room was 1A315; the plane crashed through the 4th Corridor. That was the E Ring—one quarter over. It was pretty loud. I've been in this building all 24 hours and heard crashes and bangs, and I look at this building as a living thing. I've heard it all, and I heard it that day. I was getting ready to close down the computer and leave, when I looked at the burning towers on TV and said, "Oh no, oh, no." It went through my mind that we had been hit, although I had no idea it was a plane.

I got up to go to my communications center, which was on the other side of the wall, where my radio dispatcher and call taker was. At the time we had the alarm systems working—the exterior for the perimeter of the building and the interior for the building. They used to be combined; now they are in separate areas of the building. With the alarm system we had here, I was the first person to work with it, so I knew what they were supposed to do. I walked down the hallway on the way to the [communications] center. It was a Tuesday so there was a full staff. I asked what that was, and they laughed and said they thought it was me throwing a chair or something. I looked at the screen and asked why it was all red with alarms. They looked and did not know. At the time we had eight monitors, and the fifth monitor down was the 5th Corridor. It was one of our automatic cameras, there were a few around the building. If the security of the perimeter doors was breached, the camera would automatically come on. The

doors were blown off, they were lying on the floor with debris. It was a fixed camera. I said, "Look at that. What is that? That's in the 5th Corridor." I saw [on camera] one of my officers walk through the [blown out] doorway and back again. And we saw some officers. It was a black and white camera, so it was hard to distinguish.

Different things started going on. Phones started ringing. I asked for the camera at the 4th Corridor, the Heliport entrance. When the plane hit, it not only sheared a light pole, a telephone pole, but also our camera there. And all the power was gone on that side. We had a lot of phone calls coming in asking what was going on. We were still a bit in the blind. We didn't have any officers on that side, but there were some in the general area who started responding to that scene. Chief Jester came in and we finally got a camera up, it was up at the Navy Annex. Somebody somewhere else was manipulating it, and they aimed it at the explosion itself, and all we could see was fire. For whatever reason, I was thinking that the gas station had been hit also. I picked up the phone to Arlington County—we had a direct line and they would automatically pick up. They told me we had an issue going on at the Pentagon. I said that we had been hit, but I didn't know if there were any casualties. She said, "We'll have somebody check on it." I also said that I thought somebody had detonated a bomb at the Navy gas station. We pulled the camera back and we could see flames and the whole scene at the crash site. I then began to get an idea of what was going on. In turn, I also found out that that the Navy gas station had not been hit.

Chief Jester came in and told me to get on the Big Voice and tell people to evacuate. At the time the Big Voice was run through our fire alarm system; it's separate but has the same speakers. The speakers were of very low quality. In some cases you could understand them clearly, and in some cases it came across as muffled or unreadable. In some areas of the building

the fire alarm system wasn't connected. In the 4th Corridor in particular the plane had buried itself in a way that knocked out that whole system over there, so nobody in the 4th Corridor would have gotten either the Big Voice or the fire alarm. It knocked out the fire alarm. I got on the Big Voice system that we had at the time and said that everybody had to evacuate the building. I said, "All personnel in the Pentagon need to evacuate. You need to evacuate now."

In the meantime, I was on the phone with Arlington County, we had eleven-line phone set, and it was more than once in that time frame that I would be doing something and one of my guys would say I had a phone call. I would say "which one?" They would tell me to just pick up a line. Since then I have gathered that Chief Jester, the secretary, his detail, and everyone had gone over to that side of the building. They were over on [the Heliport] side of the building when the roof collapsed and had to take off running to get out of the area. Chief Jester came back in a couple minutes later and said "Mike, you have to tell everyone not to evacuate toward the 4th Corridor." So I got back on the Big Voice and said, "All personnel evacuating the building, do not go towards the 4th Corridor. Evacuate away from the 3rd and 4th Corridors." He came back in soon after that and said "Mike, you don't understand. There are people trapped in the 4th Corridor. There are people trapped! They can't get out!" Our office was very narrow, about 4 feet, and we had a long desk with chairs. I had had the chairs taken out, so I was on my knees calling Arlington County once again to tell them to bring their collapse people over because we had a collapse, people were trapped, and it was pretty serious. Arlington acknowledged and asked how to link up. I told them to come into the Center Court. Chief Jester seemed to be responsive to the way I was handling the Big Voice, and I finally got the fire alarm going off. There was already an engine company on scene, they had watched the plane come over from Route 27. I had coordinated some response with Arlington County.

At the time, and still, the Tri-Care Di Lorenzo Health Clinic had radios and could hear us if we needed to talk to them in a situation. In this case nurse [Major Lorie A.] Brown was setting up a triage in the Center Court for the victims. She was screaming over the radio, everything was loud anyway, saying, "DPS, we have to have evacs, do you copy?" We have what is called NAWAS,* or WAWAS,† a phone system put in 10 or 15 years ago that puts us in touch with all the different agencies in the Metropolitan Region. The NAWAS part, when we first put it in, let us hear people doing broadcasts clear out to California. Now it is the WAWAS, the Washington area conference system. I got on the phone and called the Park Police. I had to go through a central dispatch. I said we had a situation over here, and I needed to go directly to the Park Police. They understood, connected me, and I said I needed Eagle One and Eagle Two. The Park Police said that they were in the air, but they were actually already over here, I later found out. They were going to take the secretary out, but he said that the only people leaving would be the wounded. This was the craziness going on at the time. I got a phone call from the same system, WAWAS, from MDW‡ a few minutes later and someone said he understood that we needed helicopters. I said that was correct. He said to tell them where to go, and they would have 40 birds in the air. I said that sounded good to me. I put a camera on the cloverleaf we have down in South Parking which extends to Columbia Pike, Route 27, and the South Parking lot. We had some construction down there but there was an area right close to the Heliport that would be convenient. They could put a couple of birds down there in the cloverleaf. So he said they were on their way. A few minutes later the secretary called me, and when I answered, it was a brigadier general who said he was from the secretary's office helping and could I brief him about what was going on. I told him we had about 30 casualties and there was a triage going on

* National Warning System.

† Washington Metropolitan Area warning system.

‡ U.S. Army Military District of Washington

outside, there had been a total evacuation, 4th Corridor had been hit, and we had no power on that side. He said, OK, they would go from there. Shortly after, someone else called, said he was the exec sec., and asked for a brief, so I told him the same thing I told the other gentleman. A big black guy, very intimidating looking, (I had dealt with him before) came in to the office and said there was a woman dead and a guy dying and we had to do something. One of my supervisors said, "Get out, get out," but I followed him out around a corner and told him to tell me what it was. He said there was a woman lying dead in the Center Court and a man who had been hit by the wheel of the plane who was dying. It was odd, because this man was always intimidating, and all of a sudden I saw this different person. I sent him back out there. All day long, that's pretty much how the day went.

Our office was filling up with smoke, and they gave us the masks to wear, surgical masks, but they didn't do much for us so nobody wore them anyway. Major Brown was satisfied with the helicopters, and said she needed to go back to the clinic. Major James Koerber, who was part of DPS and still is, had set up an incident command post underneath the bridge off 395 and South Parking and was supposedly coordinating. He heard Major Brown over the radio say she was going back to the clinic and said she could not go. She said she had patients back there, and she was going to get them out. All day long after the initial event and using the Big Voice to get the initial message out—questions—I went into an information mode. The second day they had set up the JOC [Joint Operations Center], and Deputy Chief [John] Pugrud had come down initially also. On the alarm side we had Radian, a company contracted to monitor the alarms and do all the front end work, enter badges and information. They were civilians. Pugrud told them to leave, we had our uniformed officers there. Everybody on the Radian side of the house requested to stay. That was a point where I was running back and forth. Chief Pugrud asked me

if I could use them. I said they could answer the phones. So they stayed with us. On day two they had set up a JOC over at Fort Myer.

I stayed until about 11:30 p.m. or so that night. I still hadn't gone over and helped Bill Stout pour a slab. He called me back up and said he had canceled the truck and was trying to get over here. Traffic was a mess, he was coming over on his bike. He said not to worry about the truck. He finally came over on his bike and found himself a car. I could call him any time during the day to help me take care of requests—picking things up, moving things, meetings, whatever we needed done. Most of the officers were doing the security thing, holding the area, but I could have Bill do errands for me. Around 11:00 that night Capt. Jerry Maryott and then Lt. Maritza Castro took over. I called Bill to pick me up and we had to go all the way around to Clark Street and came up through the River and the Mall. The configuration of the Mall was different then, we could drive up close to the Heliport area. I remember getting out of the car, sitting on the guard rail, watching the fire department pour water into the building; it was still on fire. I hadn't eaten all day and asked the person at the Red Cross truck to fix me a burger.

The next day I got in about 5:00 a.m. They were in the process of setting up the JOC at Fort Myer, and John Pugrud and I were the link between all the different entities—the FBI, Arlington Fire, different fire and rescue, Army, MDW—they were all at Fort Myer. He would call me and ask me to do things. They were setting up the tent city at the crash site, and starting to move stuff in. I remember also that on day one, when they called about the helicopters, MDW called soon after and said they had troops they could send in. It seemed like we needed somebody to provide more of a perimeter. I said they could go to South Parking and stage there, and we could figure out what they could do. Then the transit authority called me and said they

had buses they could supply us with if we needed them for transport. I told them to, if they could, get close to the building towards Crystal City where we could link up with them.

Another man working for Verizon, Alex Hillis, the head guy for the contract here in the building, called me up and asked what they could do. I told him we still had phone service. He said he was home, they had been evacuated, but he would come back on his bike. He asked what was needed, and I said I could get him back into the building. Right across from his office was the server room that controlled the phone service for the whole building. If we lost that, we would lose a lot. Al was so dedicated he stayed here for three days, even after his wife called to report that his son had broken his arm. He stayed until we knew we were good to go. That was in the 3B3 area, the area was called the Tank. That's where all the phone services came in.

Putney: That's on the ground floor?

Nesbitt: Yes, right off the A-E Drive. So Al made sure that our phone service was available to us. Day two Pugrud was running things through me. On the fire service side, whatever was going on. We were still running the radio, there was a ton of radio traffic. An officer (now a sergeant) was working with me 12 or 13 hours a day, his name is [Sgt.] George Gamble. He is still down there. He did yeoman service, too. The amount of information coming in by radio was enormous so Inetta Whitfield sat with him and transcribed everything that was being said, via headset, and he would be able to get the information back and forth on the radio side. I was constantly back and forth. At that point the fire picked up and was out of control. We had cameras on the building and were watching the firemen in full dress inching up on the building, going from one side to the other. It was incredible. I have to give them all the credit in the world; if it weren't for them the building would have burnt out.

Putney: When the plane hit did the fire and smoke trigger automatically some alarms, like a bell ringing, or buzzer or something. There was an alarm system other than Big Voice or with Big Voice?

Nesbitt: What occurred, I found out later, was that the plane came in, buried itself in the building, and knocked out all the alarm systems in that part of the building. Nothing was triggered in the rest of the building, there were no alarms going off until someone finally pulled a manual station. People started pulling stations.

Putney: The DPS people?

Nesbitt: No, I understand that individuals did.

Putney: Anybody can "break the glass" and just pull?

Nesbitt: Right. I also understand that Paul Weishaupt, who worked for the building manager as the primary alarm technician at the time. He knew the alarm system inside the building backwards and forwards. He has since retired. He was one of the people. Where the building comes together at the apexes, where two corridors come together, each apex has a little room called the alarm room, the simple control point, and you can pull the stations that would set off all the alarms in that wedge from top to bottom. I understand that Paul, Steve Carter, and Bob Candido were going to the different areas and pulling those alarms, as well as other individuals.

Putney: Was that a ringing or buzz, or was it a prerecorded message?

Nesbitt: It was a prerecorded message that you could barely understand. They have upgraded the speaker system so that it is better understood. It comes out with a prerecorded message plus an alarm. It says, "You have to evacuate the area," but it is a very large alarm, like a wailing siren.

Putney: When you come on with Big Voice, do you override it?

Nesbitt: Yes.

Putney: Then it cuts off and you are able to go on and give specific guidance?

Nesbitt: Yes.

Putney: The other thing I would call the alarm system.

Nesbitt: The fire alarm system.

Putney: DPS did Big Voice, and whoever is in the communications center using that mike is the Big Voice?

Nesbitt: For the longest time, not any more, they called me "Mr. Big Voice." People would recognize my voice. For the longest time, that was the way it was. But even then, when the speaker systems weren't as adequate as they are now, you would get on it and override the fire alarm system. But there was a lot of noise, and the speakers weren't all that good at the time. They have since put in good speakers, Bose speakers, I understand.

Putney: The alarm is blaring, plus this prerecorded message, and you come on and override that temporarily, click off, and the other wailing sound continues. You can cut in at any time to give specific directions, and that is what you did that morning.

Nesbitt: There probably initially wasn't even an alarm.

Putney: You were just saying, "Evacuate." The Big Voice might have come on first.

Nesbitt: It wasn't until shortly after that the alarm started going off and Chief Jester came back and said to tell them to evacuate away from the 4th Corridor. I was wondering why anyone would run that way anyway.

Putney: Would these alarms go on automatically if they detected fire, or does someone actually have to pull it to activate it?

Nesbitt: The alarm system is set up to go off if there is smoke or fire. The problem was that the plane wiped that out. The system was destroyed.

Putney: Now, that would have covered wedges 3, 4, and 5—those that had not been renovated. Would Big Voice have gone into Wedge 2 at that time?

Nesbitt: It should have.

Putney: But not Wedge One, because it was new and had its own system?

Nesbitt: I don't believe they heard anything on that side of the building, in talking to people since then. In other areas of the building, the 10th Corridor, Wedges 5 to 1, which will be the last corridor to be renovated, you could hear it. Except on the E Ring, you could not hear it. On the Concourse, you could hear it, plus, 9, 8, and 7. There was difficulty with 7, because they had put in two separate alarm systems, and they didn't intermix, so Big Voice was not in synch. There was a party in the Center Court about two years ago to recognize the responders, and Mr. [DepSecDef Paul] Wolfowitz was there. Chief Jester told him I was on the Big Voice. So it didn't reach everywhere, because the plane knocked the system in the 4th Corridor, affecting everything from 3 1/2 to 5 1/2 and everything coming back this way. From 2 1/2 over you could hear it. At the time the way the system was set up it was hit or miss. Since then it has been upgraded quite a bit.

Putney: Over at Rosslyn we get a light flashing and a wailing sound. Then there is a prerecorded voice. Would that have been in Wedge One because it was so new, there would have been a more sophisticated system? I recall Carter's people, Kathryn Greenwell, and Carter hearing a voice, and they are in Wedge One by the BOC.

Nesbitt: At the time he was down at the BOC, in the A Ring, and now his office is down toward the E Ring.

Putney: They remembered hearing a voice coming from the corridor, and they saw flashing lights all over there screens, too.

Nesbitt: That was probably me.

Putney: So that was part of Big Voice, not something new to Wedge One. So Wedge One would have been under the same system as the rest of the building?

Nesbitt: Within six months to a year we had an interface. We had two speaker systems up, so one would interface with the other. At the time it was right on the edge. You could hear something but might not make it out.

Putney: I just assumed that the new Wedge One would have a sophisticated system, with sight and sound.

Nesbitt: No, they were working on it. They were hearing my voice.

Putney: The drill system—before 9/11—what was the system? Just part of the building was involved in a test? Did Secretary Wolfowitz issue a memo to get people to pay more attention to participating in a drill?

Nesbitt: The problem was that they were constantly working on the alarm system, but the way it was set up it didn't take much to affect it—a drop in the pressure line from the Washington aqueduct, someone working would pop a pipe or something—and the next thing we knew we had a fire alarm. It was constant.

I dealt with the fire alarm a lot, up until the point I found a new home. The fire alarm shop was right next to my office, and I used to work with those guys constantly. So in the DPS realm I probably knew as much as anybody could about the fire alarm shop, outside of being an electrician. I could go down to the central rooms and look at the panel and have an idea of what was going on. More than once I went to a location where there was a central point, sort of like a

new computer in the 80s, and could jumpstart it or whatever. They had come up with the feasibility of taking phones from the rooms and plugging them in to specific areas around and talking to us via the phones rather than the radio. I got a good feel about the alarm system, and it wasn't that good. It was constantly activating, it didn't take much—a loss of pressure, people working somewhere and hitting a pipe, a malfunction. If in the renovation work someone would knock something off, there would be an alarm to evacuate the entire building. It was good practice, but with so many, people were getting jaded about it.

They had tried to set up drills to evacuate the building, and I was here during one incident in the early '90s when there was an alarm at night, and the building really was falling down. The fire department had come in and pressurized the lines to put the fire out and the next thing we knew we had a flood downstairs knocking out all the electricity, causing a huge problem, one of the few times the building could have been totally evacuated. It had never been totally evacuated because of its sheer size, just the affected area.

To run any of those drills, we tried to coordinate through my shop, the building manager and WHS [Washington Headquarters Service] or DoD, but it was almost impossible to do, because of prior commitments—SES's [Senior Executive Service], flag officers, staff work; it was hard to set that up and get total cooperation. After 2001 people got spooked and were ready to get out at any given time. Before that the alarm system wasn't the greatest because of the auto alarms going off daily, people got so they would call my shop and ask if it was for real. I don't know, even today, until I have someone check it out.

Putney: If someone broke a pipe somewhere, that would cause a fire alarm to go off?

Nesbitt: It causes a lack of pressure in the system, and the system thinks there is a fire somewhere and the sprinklers go on and it would cause a total evacuation of the building. It is the sensitivity of the alarms.

Putney: Did Secretary Wolfowitz put out a memo before 9/11 to urge people to take this more seriously?

Nesbitt: I don't remember whether it came out before or after. Beforehand we had had a couple of drills where we tried to evacuate a significant amount of the building, but they were few and far between.

Putney: Did you have a goal of once or twice a year to do a drill?

Nesbitt: It's hard to think back, but I know it was at least annually or semi-annually.

Putney: How long did it take to evacuate the building on 9/11?

Nesbitt: From talking to people since then, I know it didn't take long.

Putney: About a half-hour or so?

Nesbitt: I would say that is pretty accurate.

Putney: Up to 9/11 there had never been a full building evacuation?

Nesbitt: They tried to coordinate at least one or two, but I don't think they were as successful as hoped.

Putney: The Arlington County After Action Report talked about some recommendations and mentioned an "Abbottsville" exercise/simulation. Do you do that now, or had you practiced this training exercise where it's a small town and there is a crisis going on?

Nesbitt: We coordinated local fire and rescue, basically Gallant Fox, and I think we had the first one back in the '90, or something similar, where we had a coordination of a bio attack on the Pentagon.

Putney: Cloudy Office?

Nesbitt: Yes. I don't think we had anything up to 2001 with that sort of coordination.

Putney: Before 9/11 did the DPS folks have some kind of gas mask?

Nesbitt: Only for first responders, our emergency service team, things like that.

Putney: Would that have been appropriate for smoke, or is it for tear gas or both?

Nesbitt: It probably would help with smoke, and definitely tear gas, but they are not made up for smoke and fire, that's not their primary purpose, they are more protective from a chemical thing, like tear gas.

Putney: Most of the DPS personnel would not have had any type of mask that day?

Nesbitt: No.

Putney: When you were in the communications center, did someone give you a mask?

Nesbitt: We might have had some in the back room, but we picked some up outside from the fire people.

Putney: Is it something simple, or is it made like a firefighter's mask?

Nesbitt: It's like a surgical mask, just to help you breathe.

Putney: Prior to 9/11 there had been a number of security features built into the Pentagon renovation, like the remote delivery facility, the blast-proof windows, and what seems to be a blast wall between South parking and the building.

Nesbitt: Was that there then?

Putney: The bus stops being moved further away.

Nesbitt: The metro was still on top of us, they didn't move that until afterwards.

Putney: Was it correct to say that DPS wanted it done even though it was expensive?

Nesbitt: My rank and position didn't accord me that opportunity, but I had talked to Chief Jester at meetings where he told us the projected plan. I also know that John Pugrud was a part of that mindset, they knew that the metro was too close. We were starting to change things around. After the plane hit, things either accelerated or we changed more things. I remember Chief Jester talking about how they were going to set up the RDF and put up that berm for any kind of vehicle coming across that did detonate, there would be that whole berm protecting the corner of the building. I would have to say that for safety's sake they had been involved and there were some recommendations for more safety.

Putney: From hearing it at staff meetings and things.

Nesbitt: Yes.

Putney: The chief did talk about the Remote Delivery Facility, and the blast proof windows in particular. Those were expensive.

Nesbitt: Yes, they were.

Putney: They are heavy, you had to add more things to hold them up—

Nesbitt: The problem was that during the war, when they were putting them up, everybody thought they reinforced the walls. When they went in there they found out that the walls weren't reinforced, they were just using concrete and sandstone. That wouldn't be too protected from a big blast. As they were going into the renovation, and still are, they are reinforcing the walls. I guess it was Doc's idea to put Kevlar in, that was another expensive feature. I believe it had a big impact on how the plane hit. If it had hit another part of the building and hit high, it would be pretty rough. It was already rough.

Putney: Into Center Court.

Nesbitt: They said that; it would have taken all that fuel with it. Pugnud and I were talking about that one day. The determination was that if it hit high things would not have come out as well as they did.

Putney: And hitting Wedge 2, where they were renovating, there was a lot of empty space, too.

Nesbitt: They were just starting to reoccupy.

Putney: Before September 11, the tourists used to stream into the building in tour groups. Did the DPS have to coordinate with the Tour Office and is DPS still responsible to make sure that tourists don't veer off the path?

Nesbitt: They recommended that the tours be discontinued, as at the White House after McVeigh bombed the Murrah Building.* There had been a few incidents where people had veered off from their group. Someone asked me about it the other day, and I remembered when an individual, part of the mission from Spain, a noncommissioned officer, had come here for a tour. He went off from the group into the SecAir office and urinated on the floor right in front of everybody. We were coordinating with the different missions in the State Department to come over and get this guy. Doc Cooke† said the tours were good PR and he would not stop them. We didn't take any responsibility; normally there was just one enlisted person, from whatever service was involved. It's pretty much like that today. Depending on the size of the group the service will have a person in front and one in back and will walk with them to be sure that they know who they are. They have our radios so if there is a situation they can call us. As far as coordinating about how many people are coming in and what's going on, no. In some cases we have large groups and if they are going to be escorted in or it is after hours, they will get with us

* Timothy McVeigh bombed the Alfred P. Murrah Federal Building in Oklahoma City on April 19, 1995.

† David O. Cooke, Director, Administration and Management, Office of the Secretary of Defense

and tell us what is going on. The way the groups are set up now it's normally charity groups or schools.

Putney: Does the figure of 100,000 a year sound right for the number that used to come through here? I have this figure I need to verify.

Nesbitt: I do not know offhand, but I can go back; this goes back to when Mr. Zigler was here, he was in charge of the Security Service Branch. He told me one day that there were 22,000 people inside this building, but every day we have 35,000 people come through this building. You have a bunch of people coming in to see the different services, and whatever, but you also have the tour groups running from about 8:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m., anywhere from a handful to 30-40 people.

Putney: DPS would have had the ultimate say about security, such as keeping the honor guardsmen within your sight at all times? DPS was still very concerned at that time about the tourists, making sure their procedures were being followed?

Nesbitt: Absolutely. There was more than one time, when I was down there, when I got or had to make phone calls about some problem.

Putney: I know the Arlington County Fire Department is the Pentagon's fire department; when they would come on to the reservation to take care of some incident, did the Arlington County police usually come, too?

Nesbitt: No. The building itself and the reservation itself is exclusive government property. Arlington has nothing to do with us. We don't pay taxes, in the sense that citizens pay taxes, but Arlington is still responsible. Since we have our own police department, we take care of the law enforcement side of this reservation. That's our primary purpose. We don't need another police department coming here telling us what to do on our own property. At the same time, we would

not go out on the Arlington side of the house and tell them what to do. There has been conflict from time to time. They don't want to come in here, but occasionally we go out there. In 2001 Major Stout and I were down in Richmond when they voted on our peace officer status, and they gave us, to include other government law enforcement, peace officer status in the state of the commonwealth of Virginia. Major Stout—at the time Lieutenant Stout—was very much involved with a state senator in getting this bill passed. There was only one dissension, when I was down there, from the legislature. That gives us more authority to go out and do certain things without causing a rift. But again, we don't go out there and tell them what to do, and they don't come in here and tell us what to do.

Putney: There was no mutual aid agreement between DPS and the Arlington police on that day?

Nesbitt: Not that day. We did have a mutual aid agreement, that I was very much involved with, with Arlington Fire on the response here to the building.

Putney: Was that written?

Nesbitt: Yes. Chief [Raymond] Blankenship and I had put something together back in the early '90s on how they would respond to the building and pick up patients.

Putney: Do you still have a copy of that?

Nesbitt: Probably not. That was before this computer, and it is probably presently with the top administration. Mr. Irvine might be able to get it for you, he's down at my old position.

Putney: Was DPS a member of the Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments on 9/11?

Nesbitt: Yes it was.

Putney: Did that require signing some kind of mutual aid agreement to become a member, or is it correct to say there as no mutual aid agreement involved with your membership with the COG?

Nesbitt: I think that was part of being part of COG, setting up these agreements. We didn't have anything with the police department, on how we could interact better with them, but we had something with the fire department; and I think we were trying to set up something with D.C. and Alexandria, but everything runs slow until there is a crisis.

Putney: So there was no mutual aid agreement with the D.C. Metropolitan Police Department on 9/11.

Nesbitt: That's correct.

Putney: The FBI was here on 9/11 because of the terrorism act making it a federal crime. Who might be the key DPS person who had a lot of interaction with the FBI because an investigation was under way?

Nesbitt: That ended up being Bill Stout.

Putney: Do you recall if DPS people were doing those line searches where you stand shoulder to shoulder looking for plane parts? Were they in the building looking for remains, and in North Parking?

Nesbitt: Not so much us; they brought in soldiers from the 3rd Infantry, from what I understand, and the FBI brought in the Secret Service. There were a lot of outside agencies coming in doing that; we were more concerned with security.

Putney: Guarding that process going on. How about the line search early on, do you remember anybody saying they were part of it? You were stretched pretty thin then.

Nesbitt: No, I really don't think so.

Putney: I have references to the FBI, some Arlington County police, and I think they might have gotten some military to help out.

Nesbitt: Yes, I had to help coordinate bringing some of those folks in.

Putney: They were collecting evidence while the fire was raging. The Terrorism Task Force is something the FBI is involved with in local communities. Did the Terrorism Task Force arrive and was it stood up for this investigation?

Nesbitt: Yes. Initially, everything was fire and recovery. Arlington County Deputy Chief Schwartz was over here as the on-scene commander. They pretty much coordinated everything else. The Secret Service, the Terrorism Task Force, the FBI, were all coming in—the SAC officer for the Eastern seaboard came in. They were setting up the tent city on the perimeter, stretching out onto Route 27. It was a big coordination with fire and rescue coming in from all around the country.

Putney: Then there was something called the Terrorism Task Force that activated.

Nesbitt: Yes, from what I understand, they were here.

Putney: In the Arlington County After Action Report there is an account where Lieutenant [Robert] Medairos meets a DPS officer early on and they come to an agreement that Arlington County police will do the periphery, they will stand on Rte 27 and guard the area. The DPS will do the building and the grounds. That's logical. Were you able to identify in DPS who might have reached that agreement with the Arlington Police?

Nesbitt: No, that wasn't my part of the world. It could have been Major Koerber, Chief Jester; I don't know when that might have occurred. The next day they were talking about putting up a hundred-foot zone from the building. Lt. Bill Pearson and Sergeant Donaldson were also part of that.

Putney: It was written up that whoever was on scene in the first moments after the crash—Arlington County police showed up quickly and said they would handle it for you.

Nesbitt: I really can't tell you.

Putney: On 9/11 there were no warnings into your communications center that Flight 77 was on its way to the area. No warning at all.

Nesbitt: I can guarantee that.

Putney: And Jester didn't get a warning.

Nesbitt: Not that I know of, and I talked to him personally.

Putney: Nobody in DPS had any kind of warning that something might have been on the way.

Nesbitt: Not that I know of.

Putney: On September 12, at about 10:00 a.m., there was a partial evacuation at the firefighting scene because an unidentified plane was on its way. The JOC at Fort Myer knew it was friendly but that word wasn't gotten over to Schwartz's people.

Nesbitt: They ran out of this building like ants out of a hill. I didn't get on the Big Voice, but word of mouth spread pretty quick, and I started getting phone calls asking what was going on. I can't remember how we were receiving the information, it seemed like by radio, stating how far out the plane was every few seconds. We were putting out additional information on it, and I told George, Sgt. Gamble, to hold up, because we didn't really know what was really going on.

Putney: This was the 12th, because I know there was a frightening countdown on the 11th, and then supposedly the plane crashed in Camp David.

Nesbitt: We know nothing about the plane up in Pennsylvania. We knew about the FEMA plane coming up later, and that scared the hell out of us. We didn't know anything about the plane in Pennsylvania until later, when they said there was a plane coming in toward D.C. and Stout told me he saw two F-16s flying over the top of the building going to intercept.

Putney: By 10:15 a.m., Schwartz was told by FBI agent [Chris] Combs that they had a confirmed report of a plane projected to be here in 20 minutes, and then there was a countdown.

That, we think, was the Somerset crash, Flight 93. DPS officers outside the building were telling everybody to move farther away because another plane was coming. They were running. But you didn't know about that?

Nesbitt: I don't remember that. I do remember the FEMA plane. We were counting that one down, also. The one in Shanksville I don't remember, maybe it was the fog of war or breathing too much smoke. I read about that later. The FEMA plane coming up the Potomac, we counted that one down also, because it wasn't long after the first plane hit the building. I figured the first one didn't get me, but this one would. We weren't running, but stayed where we were. Then we saw it was a FEMA plane.

Putney: Your folks stayed in the Communications Center that morning for the first one, whether you heard about it or not; then in the afternoon again Chief Schwartz pulls all the firefighters away but you guys stay in the Communications Center?

Nesbitt: Yes.

Putney: The next day, on the 12th, word gets out somehow and you have the sense that people spontaneously evacuated. The work force was jumpy, and it was disturbing.

Nesbitt: Yes, the secretary told everyone they could come back to work, and I had been in touch with some people in WHS, and then there was another scare up at the crash site and people running away from there. That's when they decided to get the badge system going.

Putney: Is this an accurate statement: The Pentagon building and grounds did not have any anti-aircraft weapons? And neither did the Navy Annex? People assume that there is a system.

Nesbitt: This is a restricted airspace, to a point. You would have to go outside—I was just watching planes looking like they were going to land on the roof, a minute ago. That hasn't

changed since pre-9/11. That's because of National Airport. The thing is, all the planes coming in are identified, they know who is coming in.

Putney: So for the Pentagon, whether it is operated by the military services or the DPS, there is no antiaircraft weapon system on the building or on the grounds—

Nesbitt: Prior to 9/11.

Putney: Or at the Navy Annex.

Nesbitt: Prior to 9/11.

Putney: I remember they brought in stingers since 9/11; they went up all around Washington; you could see them in the canisters. Were there any, or many, bomb threats on the 11th? DPS does have its own canine explosive unit, but I found one reference in a rather authoritative source that said there were bomb threats on the 11th and the days afterwards, and that help with canine service explosive dog teams came from the Army, ATF, the Federal Protective Service, Capitol Police, Maryland State Police, and the Secret Service.

Nesbitt: Really?

Putney: Does that sound accurate?

Nesbitt: After 9/11, Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms was here, and there were some bomb situations, people with boxes or briefcases. There was an incident up at the Navy Annex in one of the lots where a guy came in claiming he was a service member and wanted to go to work. Chief [Rick] Keevill* got involved in it and this guy had a gun and a briefcase in the back of his car. The FBI, ATF went up, and they ended up detonating the briefcase, I understand. There was a gun inside, apparently there was a dog there that alerted them. It ended up being a big deal. He said that the state police had no jurisdiction over him coming on the compound, which was

* According to the interviewee, Keevill was 1st Sgt. for the Virginia State Police Barracks in Arlington on 9-11. He is now Chief of the Police Directorate, Pentagon Force Protection Agency.

not true, because just prior to 9-11-2001 they had expanded the police powers here in the area. I take that back. When we got peace officer status there was an agreement with state police and Arlington County providing more of an area of mutual response. I forgot about that.

Putney: Was that after?

Nesbitt: No, just prior. So that was one thing saying that Chief Keevill and the state police did have some authority, even though basically the president said it was not martial law but it was an emergency. There was an agreement put together.

Putney: Could you get us a copy?

Nesbitt: Maybe Mr. Irvine could get one.

Putney: With the badges and credentials, I know you probably weren't issuing those, but can you clarify it a bit? First there were wristbands given out, and when they ran out you went to a badge system. Did you have both the badges and the wristbands, or did the wristbands just go away?

Nesbitt: The wristbands just stopped. I was involved initially, coordinating with Major Stout in getting those badges out; I carried boxes out to them. After that the Secret Service came in and they had a badge system set up.

Putney: So the wristbands were no longer valid?

Nesbitt: After a certain amount of time, yes.

Putney: Did the Red Cross, and people like the Outback Steakhouse, and the other food service people also have badges, or were they outside a certain perimeter?

Nesbitt: They were outside the perimeter, they coordinated with us to come in, and they put them out in South Parking.

Putney: So if you are out in South Parking in that food service area, you're not in an area where you needed a badge.

Nesbitt: Right. They weren't in the inner perimeter.

Putney: The inner perimeter was in front of the west side of the building where the Heliport was?

Nesbitt: We called it the crash site.

Putney: Still, it's amazing that there were thousands of badges given out; then you went to a more restrictive badge, a red badge, just to get people into the building.

Nesbitt: Yes, the workers were starting to come in to either shore up or getting ready to rebuild the building. That turned into a huge issue. We had people from Afghanistan, Iraq, and Iran coming here to get jobs; we finally had to turn them away, saying, "not you folks."

Putney: Arlington County's After Action Report said that after a while the batteries of the police radios would run down and they would have to replace them. Would that have happened to DPS radios?

Nesbitt: Yes.

Putney: While they were being recharged, you couldn't use the radios?

Nesbitt: You can trade out the battery, but if you don't have an extra one you have to recharge it.

Putney: Was it difficult for someone outside the building to talk to someone inside the building with the radio?

Nesbitt: Back then it was, but it's getting better.

Putney: There was concrete, security, and things like that.

Nesbitt: Right.

Putney: When you heard Major Lorie Brown talking about needing medical evacs, were you able to talk to her to answer her that you heard her?

Nesbitt: We acknowledged it, but after that it was just getting them out.

Putney: Were you on her network?

Nesbitt: She was on ours.

Putney: The FBI at one point asked DPS if it had any images from surveillance cameras of the plane hitting the Pentagon. Chief Jester thought that by that night DPS would produce film, which we have all seen now. In March of 2002 something like five images were released to the public somehow, and recently, in May 2006, because of a FOIA request, the whole world has seen many more images. It seems that there are two cameras, with different angles.

Nesbitt: I only know of the one.

Putney: I went to the DefenseLink Web site, and it looks like one camera is back farther. Can you talk a bit about that, where these cameras were, and how did those images come to be?

Nesbitt: I heard they there were images from some of the surveillance cameras, like at the Sheridan, or something that I don't know. I do know that the Mall Plaza booth, which is no longer there, had a camera, because there were incidents of the barriers coming up under cars, lifting them up and damaging them. So they put a fixed camera that ran continuously there to see the license plate of the cars and it was a digital image.

Putney: It was recent, still in its test mode?

Nesbitt: I guess you could say that. It was a stationary camera, not the greatest image, but if a car went up it gave you everything you needed. It was pointing right at the building at the time. There might have been another camera, there was more than one out there, but the plane pretty

much wiped out everything, the camera on the outside of the 4th Corridor and the one on the pole camera, were wiped out. The only image I know of was the one at the Mall [Plaza Booth].

Putney: In March 2002 some of those images were released. Was that a leak that shouldn't have been released?

Nesbitt: I'd have to say yes. The FBI came and got my recordings of those first few days and they wanted everything linked to it.

Putney: So that became FBI property and you didn't get it back?

Nesbitt: Actually, we did, but someone recorded over it, which lost it for posterity.

Putney: The FBI has their copy. Mike Garcia used to work here and he took a lot of photos, some of which are now in the Smithsonian. Is that right?

Nesbitt: I couldn't say.

Putney: Does the name ring a bell as someone who worked here?

Nesbitt: No.

Putney: Does PFPA still have a photo collection?

Nesbitt: I don't know, you would have to talk to Irvine. He's become the central magnet.

Putney: The Emergency Response Team, the SWAT, is separate from the Protective Service Unit?

Nesbitt: Yes, they are, in a sense. They are still part of what would be the Special Operations Division, they are part of that same division, but they have two separate functions.

Putney: Retrieval of classified documents: who was in charge of recovering and securing the classified documents in the damaged area of the building?

Nesbitt: That was under SSD [Security Service Division], John Pugrud. Mike Copeland would be the person to go to, he's still here. Initially it went through me, and I would set something up

for people to get back into their areas. Finally, as more people were coming back and areas were starting to open up it got to a level where they had to have some kind of coordination. We had an incident when the Maryland National Guard was here and a flag officer was arrested. It was him, his colonel, and a senior sergeant. They all ended up in front of General Kearns.

Putney: This is in the Maryland National Guard's After Action Report.

Nesbitt: They called me on that. I sent Captain Castro, [then Lieutenant] over to find out what was going on. The Maryland National Guard called and said there was a breach of security there. I thought it was a major general, but it was a brigadier general. He wanted to run in and grab something, and it caused a big stir. A while later I heard that Army Security, I believe Mr. Ron McGuinness and Colonel Phillips, went to the chief of staff, and they gave it to Gen. Kearns.

Putney: What exactly does it mean when you say an officer is "sworn"?

Nesbitt: They are sworn law officers.

Putney: Is it all DPS, whether you wear a uniform or not?

Nesbitt: This is a good way to put it. Under these sections, Section 264 Title 10 and Section 318 Title 40, we are sworn to uphold the peace, that's our job. When we see something we are supposed to act on it. We are peace officers, but we're on the federal side. You have investigators, 1811s, 1108s, something like that, in different areas of the government, they are investigative law officers. We are peace officers, we take care of security and law enforcement. We have a traffic function here; our court docket has quadrupled since 2001. I used to be in charge of staffs for DWIs. On our reservation we would probably get 5 or 10 DWIs a week. We respond to all thefts, all breaches of the peace, even the most mundane. Someone called and complained that someone took a bite of his banana, we went up and took a report on it. We also have responded to shootings and conducted investigations.

Putney: I have seen references to Col. David Phillips, director of security in the Army's Office of the Administrative Assistant.

Nesbitt: I knew him when he was a lieutenant, in Germany. He was here at the time.

Putney: Did he interact with DPS? What would he have been doing?

Nesbitt: He didn't do too much with us. At the time, Ron McGuinness was in charge of security on the Army side and would come to us. For example, on that side of the building they needed air purifiers, and Ron came to me so as to get them into the building. The RDF wasn't open at the time. Colonel Phillips had interacted with me not too long before the plane hit. We dealt on some of the security issues, especially on the Army side, if something came up. I dealt more with Ron McGuinness than I did with Colonel Phillips.

Putney: Is there anything else that you think I should touch on?

Nesbitt: Yes, it's part of the official record on the other side, it dealt with my shop. The second day we were coordinating with the JOC over at Fort Myer, the fire was becoming out of control. We were right in line with that server room, for the phone system, it was the same line as if you ran a line from the A Ring to the E Ring. Pugrud was calling me every other minute telling me to do things. I had people calling me from the Army Operations Center, the NMCC [National Military Command Center], the Secretary's office—one individual called me from the secretary of defense's office and said we had no idea what would happen if they lost that server—.

Arlington was getting ready to make a fire break right down the 3rd Corridor, between the 2nd and 3rd Corridor. Whatever that meant, they were going to take me out and take that phone circuit system out. If they had done that it would have wiped out all communications within the Pentagon. They would have had to follow COOP procedures. The secretary didn't want to do that.

Putney: Not if he didn't do it the first day.

Nesbitt: They were calling me constantly. The fire was to a point where smoke was even thicker than on day one. It had dissipated for a time, but when it took up again the smoke in my office was even heavier than before and looked pretty bad. One of my officers was going out to get something done and he came back saying he had run into some firemen and they asked him where he was going. He said he was going back to his office and they said they were getting ready to put a firebreak down the hallway and it would wipe the whole area out. They literally chased him down the hallway. But Officer Offer can run, and he ran back to our office and locked the door. He came in and told me they were getting ready to wipe the whole thing out. I remember the guy from the secretary's office saying I didn't understand. But I understood that if it wiped them out it would wipe me out. It would have wiped out my radio and I wouldn't have been able to communicate. I went in and told everybody that they might have to leave. I told them I was not expecting anyone to risk his life, but I was not leaving until the last possible second. One of my officers, an old soldier from way back, was sitting there, and he said, "Lieutenant, we don't leave until you leave." It was in that time frame that Arlington finally figured out the best way to fight the fire. I talked to Lt. Nick Salameh at Arlington later on and he told me they finally went in with pry-bars and lifted up the top of the roof. Underneath was concrete, but above it was slate, tarpaper, and wood. They got it up and started spraying underneath it with high pressure hoses. Originally they had been trying to break through the top.

Putney: Through the slate.

Nesbitt: They decided they would raise it up and go low.

Putney: Where exactly was the server room?

Nesbitt: Right here is my office, 1A315; here is A, B, C, D, and E Ring. The plane hit right here. The fire was going both ways, but in the C Ring, A-E Drive, back to Center Court, back to the internal road taking you around, right here were the server rooms. That's where Verizon is. They were going to put the break right through there, wiping out all phone service and whatever radio service went through the phone.

Putney: The break would have come all the way down from the roof to the first floor?

Nesbitt: Yes.

Putney: It would create a complete separation.

Nesbitt: The fire was running both ways.

Putney: This was on the 12th.

Nesbitt: Yes. I later talked to Nick and he said when he went down they were in full gear already. They went down to the 5th Floor offices. He couldn't go into the offices for more than a few minutes because it was so hot. They couldn't keep the fire under control.

Putney: Was there water around it too, where some of the building maintenance people were putting sandbags around it to protect that?

Nesbitt: The second day I received many calls from the secretary's office, a few from the NMCC, and I think some from AOC. NAVSI was wiped out. They were telling me—especially the secretary's office—that I didn't understand the importance of keeping the server room up. I said, "Yes, I do understand." Al Hillis told the firemen to back up and they gave him one hour. If they didn't have it under control in one hour he would have to evacuate. These phone calls started going around and got to JOC. John Pugrud called me numerous times and told me to do something. I didn't know what to do. I was in the same ship—I lose my phones, I lose my radio. I already told you how and when my officer (Parran Offer) was told about the firebreak.