

# NCIS Bulletin

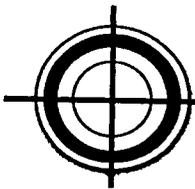
United States Naval Criminal Investigative Service  
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*NCIS Responds  
to  
September 11th*

*Operation  
Noble Eagle -  
D.C.'s Largest  
Crime Scene*

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# Bulletin

## Summer 2002



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# FROM THE DIRECTOR

On September 11, 2001, every citizen in the United States learned what we have known for quite some time: asymmetric threats to our nation, to our way of life, to our loved ones are real, and they are here to stay.

As you will read in this edition of the *Bulletin*, NCIS was responding to the attacks on our nation even before the Pentagon was struck. Within an hour of the Pentagon bombing, NCIS was on the scene, where we remained for nearly a month. In the following weeks and months, we placed an increased emphasis on preventing acts of domestic and foreign terrorism to ensure that we remain the Navy-Marine Corps Team's front-line defense to asymmetric attack.

Even before the Cole was struck in October 2000, NCIS was shifting from a "response" mode to a "prevent" mode. The attack on the Cole accelerated that shift, but challenged our resources—human, physical, and fiscal. On September 11<sup>th</sup>, we were in the process of revising our strategic direction and ramping up our resources in light of the Cole attack. Naturally, we shifted that effort into high gear, and created the Modernization Team to evaluate and justify our increased resource needs.

As a result of our ongoing strategic planning process, we have recently articulated the following three operational goals for the agency:

- Prevent terrorism and other hostile attacks against DON forces and installations;
- Protect against compromise of DON sensitive information and critical systems;
- Reduce criminal activities that impact on DON operations.



Critical to accomplishing these goals are the analytical and investigative skills and tools we have always used and nurtured. We have experienced, as the Navy Inspector General put it, "an explosive growth of mission elements in the aftermath of the USS Cole attack and September 11<sup>th</sup>." In fact, I can't think of any time in our past when our skill set was in such high demand, or held in such high regard by the Navy and Marine Corps.

And now, we have an important new tool in our arsenal: arrest authority. In April, we cleared the final hurdle when Attorney General Ashcroft approved the guidelines for implementing the authority, culminating over 60 years of effort to obtain statutory arrest authority. It's the one tool that money couldn't buy, and it couldn't have come at a better time.

With our Navy and Marine Corps now fighting in Afghanistan, and likely to see combat in other areas in the near future, our mission to protect the protectors is more important—and more rewarding—than ever. Now is a great time to be a part of the NCIS team, and it's only going to get better.

David L. Brant

Assistant Director for Communications

Thomas F. Houston

*Bulletin* Editor

Larry Jackson

*Bulletin* Design & Layout

Janet Reynolds

Contributing Writer

JOC Barbara Shupe, USNR

The *Bulletin* is your tool for exchanging information, and your input is essential. Please feel free to

contact me at:

(202) 433-8829 (office)

(202) 433-0904 (fax)

LBJackson@ncis.navy.mil

There is a need for enhancing communications between Headquarters and the field elements of the Naval Criminal Investigative Service (NCIS). We satisfy this need and increase our effectiveness in serving the Department of the Navy by selectively publishing information of interest to the members of the NCIS. This *Bulletin* is intended for use by all members of NCIS.



# Operation Noble Eagle D.C.'s Largest Crime Scene

By JOC Barbara Shupe, USNR  
Communications Directorate

For the men and women of the Naval Criminal Investigative Service (NCIS), it began as a routine Tuesday in the Washington, D.C. area, but none of them will ever forget where they were or what they were doing on the morning of September 11, 2001—or its aftermath.

The horror began in New York City at 8:45 a.m. with the first of two attacks on the World Trade Center (WTC). Less than an hour later, American Airlines Flight 77 slammed into the west face of the Pentagon at ground level, killing 58 passengers, six crew members, 139 military and civilian workers in the building and the hijackers—five Middle Eastern terrorists. At 10:10 a.m., the fourth, and last, hijacked airliner crashed in a field in Somerset County, Pa., its intended target unknown. When the carnage ended, over 3,000 people had been killed in an unprecedented act of terrorism against the United States.

In the 58 minutes between the first attack on the WTC and the assault on the Pentagon, NCIS personnel were already responding. They were among the first warriors in what would come to be called “Operation Noble Eagle.”

## DAY ONE

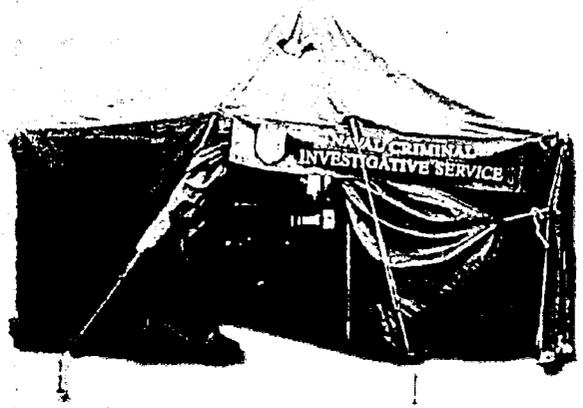
According to Navy Intelligence Specialist 1st Class (Surface Warfare) Ronald Bazzett, it was a regular workday at the Antiterrorism Alert Center (ATAC) at NCIS Headquarters in Washington, DC. Bazzett is NCIS’ Sailor of the Year and Division and Command Leading Petty Officer.

“(ATAC) is in the pipeline with other services and other CINCs (Commanders-in-Chief) to provide indication and warnings (of possible threats),” he explained. “We’re the ‘quick look guys.’ We look at the raw data and pass it on for analysis within and without NCIS.”



ISSN Jake Herminghaus and Lt. Todd Spriggs prepare a Navy Blue Dart message for release to the fleet. A Blue Dart is a time-sensitive report warning commanders of imminent terrorist attack.

# NCIS Responds



“It was quiet until we saw the aircraft go into the first World Trade Center building (on TV),” he recalled. “We thought it was a mishap until the second aircraft hit. Then we jumped in to support the watch.”

SA Pat Hagen, Deputy Assistant Director (DAD) for Counterintelligence Operations (Code 22A), was in an 8:30 a.m. meeting with SA Joe Hefferon, Assistant Director (AD) for Counterintelligence, and other Code 22 staff, in the ATAC conference room.

“We heard the ATAC folks exclaiming about the first plane crash,” Hagen recalled. “So we got up, went out, and watched the TV for a few minutes. At that time, there was lots of speculation on TV about the crash having been an accident.

“We all watched the second plane hit the tower. At that moment, I just made the decision that it wasn’t an accident—that it was a terrorist attack of some type.”

Acting on his decision, Hagen immediately huddled with his Code 22 colleagues in the ATAC conference room.

“We weren’t anticipating an attack on the Pentagon,” Hagen said. “But we reflected on the lessons learned from the USS COLE (bombing 11 months earlier), knowing that a timeline would be useful and that we’d need names and numbers for points of contact. So we began posting critical information on the wall. We knew we’d need a computer for the timeline as well as one for the investigation. We’d

also need basic communications and data entry so that we could later reconstruct what had happened. We knew that the size and scope of this (attack) would require some form of NCIS involvement.

“During the USS COLE investigation,” Hagen continued, “we had to reconstruct earlier threat information to see if we’d missed an indicator, so I knew we’d need to do that here, as well. We actually discussed whether we really needed a task force, but I figured the information we might lose by not starting up would be irretrievable. I told everyone to make family calls and to plan on being very late (getting home).

Then everyone pitched in to set up a command center. “John Weathers came up to install phone lines, and we announced that we were establishing a command center and a 24-hour watch. I deputized Steve



*Left to Right: Marty Ray, Debbie Wells, Janis Benjamin (hidden), Brad Howell, Les Vay, Steve Smith and Pat Hagen in the NCIS command center.*

(Smith), who was...head of the Americas Division. I basically put myself in charge. Joe Hefferon had gone downstairs to meet with the Director.”

Meanwhile, Doug McGlothlin got a team of analysts to pull and review historical data, while Dave Conrad and Bill VonStorch began setting up the computers for the command center. Debbie Wells was maintaining a timeline, using a notebook until the computers were set up.

“Code 23 contributed SA Neill Robins (DAD for



Debbie Wells and Janis Benjamin keep track of events and NCIS actions in the command center on September 11th.

Economic Crimes, now retired) and he developed a schedule for 24/7 operations,” Hagen continued. “We sent out a message to the field offices saying that we were setting up a command post. We also spoke with the Northeast Field Office and ascertained that they were in contact with NYPD. Because of all of our Fleet Week evolutions over the years, (SA) John Crimmins (in New York) and his crew knew exactly what they needed to do, and they essentially had a desk at One Police Plaza. So once we knew Crimmins and his people were in place, we knew we didn’t have to worry about that anymore—we could just collect information.”

The computers were just getting installed when

the Pentagon was attacked.

“We were on the phone with our NCIS representatives to the Pentagon, Defense Intelligence Agency, CNO’s office and various other organizations (at the Pentagon), when they were told to evacuate the building,” Bazzett recalled.

“We immediately launched an effort to track down which NCIS personnel were assigned to the Pentagon and which might have been there on business,” Hagen said. “Then we tried to contact all of them. It took quite a while. Some weren’t located until 1:30 p.m.”

Having accounted for his people and started the logistics ball rolling, Hagen’s focus shifted to data collection.

“I was now very concerned about getting data,” he said. “I immediately asked Dave Conrad to begin putting together a brief, even though I didn’t know who—or when—we might brief. Shortly thereafter, we got a call. Within an hour, I briefed the (Chief of Naval Operations’) N3/5, who was preparing to set up an alternative command post for the CNO and SECNAV in our building. By the end of the day, we had also briefed the CNO, the Secretary (of the Navy), and the Director. As events unfolded and we got more data on the flights, we kept the seniors advised.”



photo by D. Parlato

*In a makeshift command center at NCIS HQ, the Secretary of the Navy, the Chief of Naval Operations, and their staffs get the latest information on the damage to the Pentagon and efforts to account for the missing.*

Around the nation and world, NCIS offices were responding to increased force protection needs, while the Washington, Norfolk, and Lejeune field offices and Headquarters scrambled to get people to the Pentagon.

At the Washington Field Office (DCWA), SAC Al Billington directed all of his supervisory special agents, who had been meeting that morning, to return to their offices. Recalled SA Dave Di Paola, "I left before the Navy Yard was closed down and headed south on (Interstate) 395. I was about five minutes from the Pentagon—near the Tidal Basin—when I heard on the radio the Pentagon had been hit. I could see the smoke from the Pentagon. I couldn't call out on my cell phone, but I got an incoming call from our agent at JTTF FBI (Joint Terrorism Task Force, Federal Bureau of Investigation), asking me to assemble all the MCRTs (Major Case Response Teams) at Henderson Hall, the Marine Corps base across from the Navy Annex overlooking the Pentagon. I managed to get through to Annapolis, to SSA Bruce Dolinka, and asked him to get an MCRT member in his office to rally the other MCRT members to meet me at Henderson Hall. I headed for Henderson Hall with lights and sirens."

Di Paola was first to arrive, but others would soon follow. Within a few minutes, and just before the Navy Yard was locked down, Lou Eliopulos, Code 23 Senior Homicide Analyst, and SAs Don Housman and John Marsh were driving past the Pentagon, enroute to Henderson Hall.

"Of the 18 MCRT members, we got 15 to Henderson Hall, despite a complete communications blackout in the metro area (and the base lockdowns)," said Di Paola.

Tuesday was a milestone in the life of SA Erin Betro's son—his first day of preschool. So she planned to take him and come in late to her job as a staff counterintelligence officer assigned to the Naval Sea Systems Command. While driving to school, her cell phone rang.

"I got a call that a plane had flown into the World Trade Center," she recalled. Continuing on to the preschool, she settled her son in his classroom and joined other stunned adults around the office TV for

a moment to see what was happening. There she received a second cell call directing her to report to the command post being established at Henderson Hall.

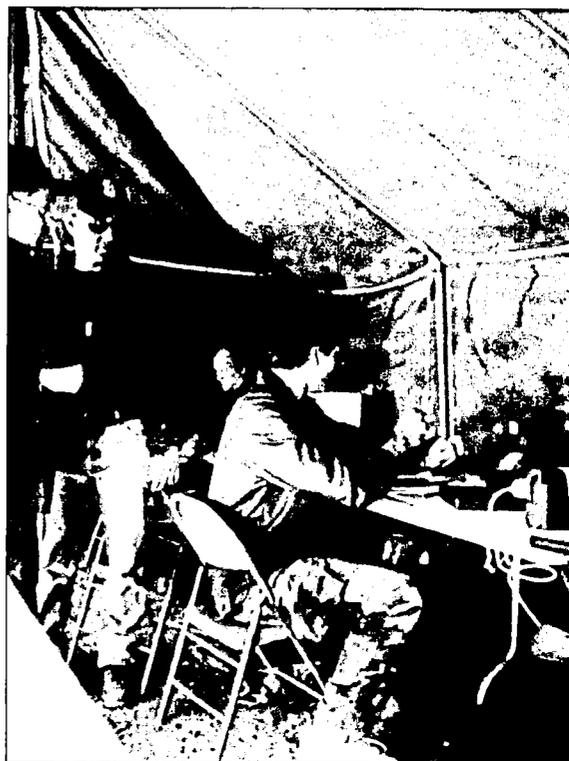
Driving a government vehicle and flashing NCIS credentials, Betro pursued police cars through the hastily erected roadblocks surrounding the Pentagon, arriving at Henderson Hall by 11:30 a.m. She was the second NCIS agent to arrive.

"I'm a senior member of the MCRT. We work homicides, suicides, rapes," Betro explained. "But we had NEVER worked anything of this magnitude!"

Below them lay a spectacle that defied belief.

"It was stunning to see the damage," Eliopulos said. "I recalled some bombing pictures I'd seen from World War II, and it looked like that."

"We assembled at the staging area and checked in with SA Pete Hughes, who was there coordinating," Eliopulos said. With the Pentagon still burning, the NCIS team set up computers, made calls to get additional people in, and began coordinating with other federal and local agencies.



*SA Pete Hughes in the NCIS command post near the Pentagon.*

“Amazingly,” said Betro, “our Nextel cell phones worked!”

Flight 77 had demolished the Navy’s command and control center—a repository of some of its most sensitive data. Protection and recovery of this material fell to SA Dennis Becker, a DCWA agent in charge of special access programs—the Navy’s equivalent to the crown jewels. “I was supposed to be in a meeting in the Pentagon on the fifth floor that morning,” he said. “I blew off a meeting for training. I’ll never miss training again!”

After ascertaining that his people were accounted for, Becker left the Navy Yard with SA Chris Compel and Jim DeSatnick, a Navy civilian who, Becker said, “knew where things were.”

“We wanted to gain access to our spaces to retrieve our hard drives and the safes that were left open—to make sure they were locked and secure,” recalled Becker. Arriving at the command post and unable to enter the building, they conferred with the FBI, the engineers and others who had access to, and interest in, the Pentagon, to plan their entry into the building once the fires were out.

“Fires kept us out of the site until about 3:30 or 4 p.m.,” Eliopulos said. “(Then) we changed into jumpsuits and prepared to go in.”

While waiting, they set up camp in a tent on the grounds near the point of impact. They were there when workers unfurled that huge American flag directly over their tent.

“That was quite a moment—to be there and be a part of it,” Eliopulos said.

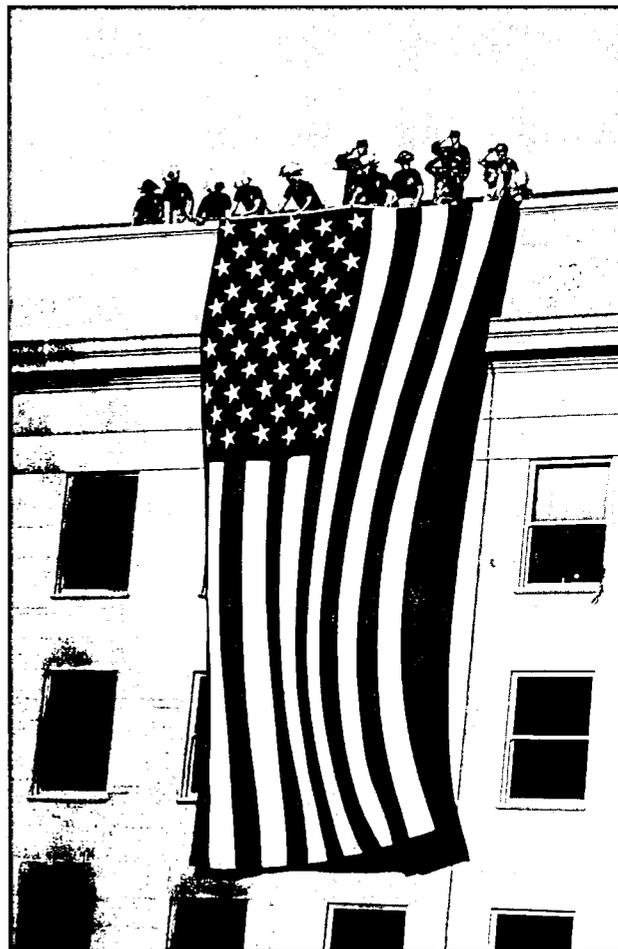
Although stubborn fires kept would-be rescue and recovery teams at bay the first night, the Pentagon parking lot was teeming with activity. A steady stream of supplies, equipment, tents, cold drinks, food, water and volunteers arrived and began setting up to support the workers.

“No one entered the building that night,” Eliopulos said. “It was obvious then that we would be in a recovery mode, not a rescue mode.”

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Back at the ATAC, which already operated 24/7,

planners were coping with the instantaneous workload increase generated by the attacks, while sustaining the worldwide mission. “Everyone worked at least 12 hours that first day,” Bazzett said. “Day shift workers’ schedules were adjusted. Off-duty watchstanders and (Navy) reserve personnel were called in to support the watch and the CTTF (Counterterrorism Task Force). Our NCIS reserve unit’s support was crucial to the CTTF. IS1 Karen Stroud from MSC (Military Sealift Command) also pitched in.”



Bazzett said he was so busy that the reality of the attacks didn’t set in right away.

“A good friend of mine works at the Pentagon and lost 13 of his (people) in the attack,” Bazzett said. “That’s when it really hit me.”

Many Americans shared Bazzett’s disbelief that day. But as a part of the intelligence gathering community, he felt a particular burden.

"It was inconceivable anyone could plan and carry out such a plan," he said. "Unbelievable! And that so many attacks were being coordinated at one time was, again, unbelievable! I couldn't see something like this happening on US soil! How did this happen?"

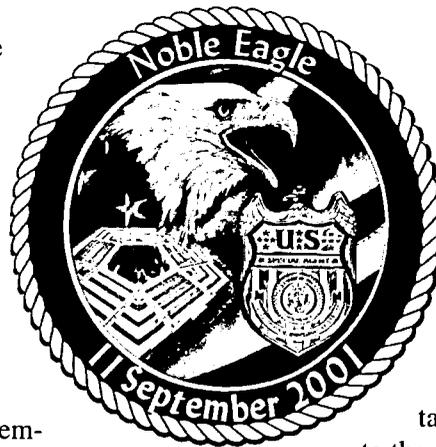
## DAY TWO

Before dawn on Day Two, September 12, NCIS personnel had already turned to. Lou Eliopulos was standing by to enter the building with his team. But first they were diverted to Arlington National Cemetery to conduct a search for debris from the plane—while walking shoulder-to-shoulder.

"We covered every inch of that cemetery," Eliopulos said. "We found so many plane parts and remains. Many people showed up to work who weren't scheduled, and we needed them for this job."

Numerous body recovery teams were set up to handle the initial volume of remains recovered, he said. Later they were reduced to six teams of five members each. During this time, they began charting evidence. Having worked as a chief forensic investigator at a medical examiner's office for 15 years before joining NCIS, Eliopulos knew more than most. He was able to call on this expertise early on when he briefed the debris sifters on what to look for.

When finally permitted to enter the Pentagon, workers had to adopt a strict safety regimen that would remain in place during the 18-day long recovery period. During a 12-hour shift, workers might go through the following process



several times. First they were required to don biohazard suits with breathing apparatus and hard hats, then were limited to only one hour at a time. When they left, they went through a decontamination process. Eliopulos described the experience.

"It was extremely warm in the suit," he explained. "I was duct-taped everywhere that connected me to the outside world, so no air got in. The

Pentagon was dark and foggy, and still hot from the fires. I walked along narrow paths I couldn't see very well, that were strewn with twisted, jagged metal, ankle-deep in water some places, with wires hanging down everywhere. It's just incredible how that old building withstood the damage! We used flashlights and walked single-file—a bizarre experience! The recovery people were still in there, charting and looking. As they were shoring up the building, they would find more bodies."

Also on the site that second day was SA Erin Betro.

"When I first got there, I was on a body recovery team for several days," she said. "I was with an FBI team out of Norfolk—probably six or seven of us.

"When we first went in—we were one of the first teams in—we cleared a route. Some parts of the Pentagon were still burning! It was dark, and there were wires hanging everywhere. We slogged through six-to-eight inches of water! At the time, I wondered, 'Has anyone turned off the electricity?'

"We found an unbelievable amount of debris," she continued. "There was a lot of waiting. It was a long process. Teams



*Lou Eliopulos, assigned to HQ's Cold Case Squad since 1999, suited up and ready to enter the Pentagon crime scene.*

shoring up the building would come upon bodies, then would stop and call us.

"Pressing on, we came to where the nose of the plane had stopped, and found a hole," Betro said. "We went into the punchout hole, hoping to find the black boxes, but they were recovered by someone else later.

"Several times we had to leave the scene due to alarms," she said. "We didn't know if it was another attack! It was really scary. They told us to run!"

"If an alarm sounded, we were told to get the hell out!" said Eliopulos. "That happened to me several times. Here we were, walking like penguins to begin with, then we're running like penguins! Once clear of the building, we stood by to await all clear. Then we returned to recover more bodies.

"Each time we left the restricted area, we had to go through the decontamination station. Usually we had to wait for it."

One tense moment for him occurred early in the recovery process.

"I found the body of a woman whose watch had stopped when the plane hit," Eliopulos said. "I had to crawl into the space where she was trapped and just knew debris was going to collapse on me."

But it didn't and he soldiered on.



*NCIS Director Brant talks to the NCIS response team at shift change. From 11-28 September, NCIS dedicated 53 personnel to the Pentagon investigation.*

"We were only supposed to work the site for one hour," he said. "My record was five hours! I worked a little over two weeks without a day off because I

wanted to finish this."

Across the Potomac River, at the CI command post, Pat Hagen was concerned with not only the Pentagon crime scene, but also with the broader investigation into the identities of the hijackers and possible links to al Qaeda.

"(NCIS) as an organization decided that regardless of venue, we wanted agents out on the street talking to anyone and everyone, looking for pertinent information or anomalies, and feeding it to the command post.

"Because of that, within 48 hours, NCISRU Dallas and Pensacola came up with some critical information that later provided significant investigative leads for quite some time," Hagen said. "They pushed the information to the command post, and we fed the concepts to the FBI, which started an entire investigative venue based on those inputs.

"Shortly thereafter, DCWA was able to provide critical and credible information that was to lead to significant investigative leaps for the FBI regarding suspects' identity, background, and training."

By now, the CNO and SECNAV had shifted their temporary command center from NCIS HQ to the Navy Annex. Agents were deployed there, as well as to the FBI SCIOC to coordinate information and joint investigations, as required. NCIS analysts were also loaned to various FBI entities, where their analysis was highly regarded.

"It got to the point where," Hagen said, "in my opinion, NCIS was so far ahead in the investigative thought process that when we approached the FBI with leads, they'd just say, 'Handle it.' Of course, they were also short on people. I can't emphasize just how crucial (SA) Rich Cloonan was to our efforts with the FBI."

While many NCIS assets were reacting to the attacks, Hagen was also concerned with countering additional threats to Navy and Marine Corps assets.

"I tasked a group of analysts to write the first—and only—white paper on the incident," he said. "Eventually, that paper would be used to provide a perspective of the psychology and dynamics of what had occurred. We looked at behavioral issues, used

regular analysis, and then considered Islamic historical and cultural context.”

The paper laid out possible future actions so that NCIS could focus analysis and investigative capabilities, while framing the context for future threat reporting. Hagen continued, “It provided a framework for moving to a proactive response, allocating resources and making DON (Department of the Navy) assets safe. Navy and Marine Corps seniors who received the brief realized that this wasn’t just a one-shot deal—they needed to change the way they were going to do (and fund) their activities in the future.”

By the end of the second day at the Pentagon crime scene, a certain amount of order was emerging from the chaos, as everyone realized that the effort would have to be sustained for a considerable length of time. Thirty NCIS personnel worked days, while a second shift of 25, mostly NCIS people, was formed to work nights. Hours were formalized, with each shift working 14 hours: 12 on the crime scene and one hour of turnover at the beginning and end of each shift. The FBI segregated an area for equipment issue and evidence collection. Managers made sure their people had what they needed.

“I never got into the building,” Di Paola said. “Pete Hughes and I coordinated personnel and logistics with the FBI and other federal agencies and local authorities. I was continuously doing administration and logistics—running things back and forth that they needed, finding people,

etc. Supervisors were busy making up work schedules, coordinating days, keeping pay straight, tracking supplies. Headquarters gave us everything we asked for! We called Roger Besaw (Logistics Manager, Code 28C) and he did his best to get it down there.”

### DAY THREE

By now, the number of NCIS personnel on the scene had grown to 53, according to Di Paola, plus two Marines from CID at Henderson Hall. Their numbers included forensic consultants, supervisors, and investigative assistants. In addition to Quantico, they came from Norfolk and Philadelphia—and, after the airports re-opened—San Diego.

“Three volunteers were agent recruits who hadn’t even been to basic school,” Di Paola said. “Some were just out of school. None of these could fly—they all drove!”



SA Dave Di Paola at the Pentagon crime scene.

While search and recovery teams continued to scour the Pentagon for evidence and bodies, SA Dennis Becker and his team stayed focused on protecting their clientele. “We had our own little world we were very concerned about,” Becker explained. That concern reached to the highest levels of the Navy leadership.

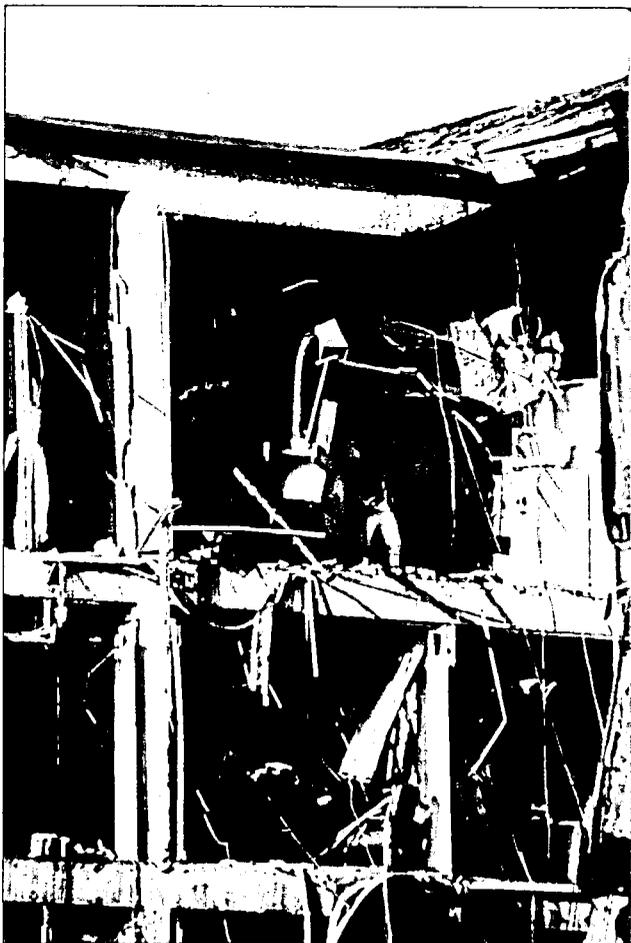
“(Since) we realized it was a crime scene, we started coordinating the evidence aspect,” Becker said. “We have a counterintelligence perspective and we’re also law enforcement, so we understand the importance of preserving a crime scene. That’s why we were able to access (those areas of the Pentagon) well before

it was declared (safe for others to enter)—because

of our law enforcement 'hat' and the need to get to some of the most sensitive data the Navy has."

"When we went in, in some places there was pure darkness," Becker recalled. "You could feel the building swaying a bit. But there was always something that had to be done, so we kept going back in. Someone would recall an item that had to be retrieved—maybe years of work in a hard drive representing a total of millions of dollars.

"One time we had trouble getting into a place we had to get into—blocked by a wall," Becker recalled. "Chris (Compel) was able to get through the wall! To me that was very important! We could have said, 'we can't get through.' Chris made sure we completed the mission. He had the respect of everyone out there."



*SA Chris Compel gingerly approaches a safe to ensure that the sensitive materials inside are secure. Behind him in the white suit is Jim DeSatnick of DON.*

"We were retrieving our (documents and equipment) for days," he recalled. "After we got into the building, on the 13<sup>th</sup>, we found that most of our stuff was secured. We found one computer was up (having survived the explosion and fire). We went in and out of the building for six-to-eight days thereafter. Once we worked for two days straight, maybe three. It all runs together now."

#### **DAYS 4-27**

For the first few days, evidence was collected by hand and brought to the FBI's Evidence Recovery Team, which had cordoned off an area near the former helicopter pad. Military teams brought out debris wheelbarrow by wheelbarrow, and after their shifts slept in tents in the parking lot. But every bit of debris inside the Pentagon could contain evidence or human remains or classified information—it would have to be searched.

Front loaders entered the wounded Pentagon, bringing out debris and evidence, and dumped it into truck-mounted dumpsters. The trucks would then carry the dumpsters around the Pentagon to North Parking, where an area about the size of a football field had been secured. By the end of the second week, most of the investigative action was in North Parking.

"Trucks kept crossing the parking lot, bringing in loads of debris, which grew to be about two stories high," Betro recalled. "We sifted through the large pile to create five smaller piles that were primarily divided into plane parts, human remains, classified review (CR) process, computers and miscellaneous."

Sifting through the debris in 12-hour shifts on the asphalt parking lot while wearing the biohazard (Tyvek) gear, either at night under lights or in the broiling sun, took a physical and emotional toll on workers. But other volunteers were eager to take their place.

"Whenever new members came in, I told them 'this job will go on,'" Betro said. "If you can't come in—don't! Just let me know."

"NCIS sent over classified reviewers to help us sift through the debris page by page," Betro said. "We drew from ONI (Office of Naval Intelligence), re-

serve agents—as many different people who had the proper clearances—to conduct reviews. Our two primary missions were classified recovery and collecting evidence. We had a list of things to look for—including electronics, wiring, entire safes and file cabinets. The dogs would go through first, looking for human remains, then we would rake out the debris. We tried to separate out personal items for return to the families. Because of the nature of the work, it was difficult for some of the people who were not NCIS agents.”

By the time SA Michelle Jackson got to “the pile” of debris in the parking lot, it was a sight to behold.

“We would see literally mountains of paper and knew we’d have to go through it page by page,” she said. “You’d see documents relating to one person and wonder if that person got out. Periodically you’d find a piece of bone and take it directly to the military.”

The typical procedure after the loads had been transported and searched by the dogs, she said, was highly labor-intensive.

“Two 30-person teams would go around the perimeter of a pile with hoes and rakes and begin bit-by-bit to pull out documents. We’d put them in wheelbarrows to be sorted later. In the beginning we would pull out pieces of equipment, the plane, the building, remains—and separate it all. The classified document review was continuous. There were always several wheelbarrows waiting to be reviewed. Everything was very organized. The EPA was there and concerned about everyone’s safety. Safety was a priority. Every time you went (outside the restricted area), you had to get decontaminated.”

Volunteers did their best to ensure that the physical and spiritual needs of the workers were met. “There was a city out there (in the parking lot)—no kidding,” said Jackson. “There was a small BX, the Outback (Steakhouse), Salvation Army, drinks, candy and snacks! Food was never a problem. You never had to leave the scene. You could eat, drink, change your clothes, brush your teeth—all right there.” Chaplains also made their way through the teams, attending to whoever needed their services.

Jackson’s typical day began early on the day shift.

“We would suit up in the morning, then completely



*SA Michelle Jackson dons a Tyvek suit as she prepares for her shift.*

decontaminate at noon,” she said. “Breaks were taken inside the (restricted) area. Lunch outside the area. We even had TVs in the refreshment tents.

“I worked the pile for about two weeks,” Jackson explained. “I was lucky enough to work there until it ended. I got to sign the (NCIS) flag (covered with worker’s signatures, which is now on display in a place of honor near the Director’s office).”

For Jackson, the tedium of raking and sifting was relieved by two things—people and a sense of purpose.

“Working the site was like old home week—seeing people you’d worked with before,” she said. “The camaraderie and the cooperation between agencies really were seamless. Everybody just pulled together so hard and for so long without complaint! There were so many agencies represented, we had to write our name and organization on the back of our Tyveks.”

“It was amazing to see how many agencies worked together so well to make sure the effort was done well. And because you had to walk past the Pentagon, you were reminded why you were there every single day as you went to work. I wanted to find out who did this, so I just put my head down and focused on the work.”

days extended into weeks. Finally, with the two-story mound of rubble nothing more than streaks on the asphalt parking lot, the investigative teams who had worked so hard together for so long were sweeping up and saying goodbyes. The NCIS flag that had flown over the tent for the last few days was struck and placed on a table for everyone to sign.



*Members of the NCIS recovery team listen to the morning brief by the FBI prior to their shift on the rubble pile.*

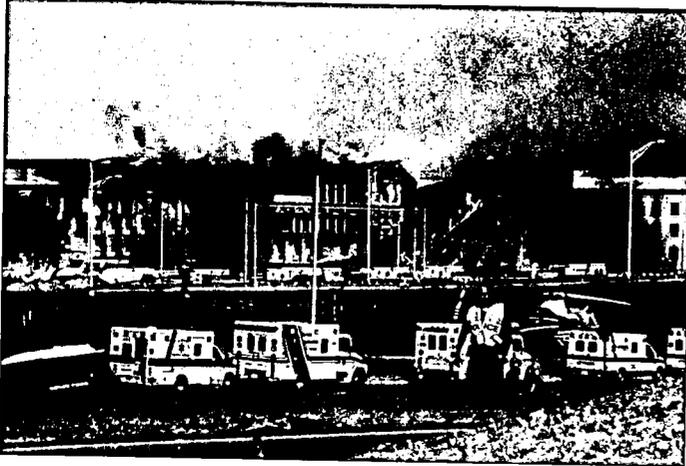
## DAY 28 PLUS

As the atmosphere of immediate crisis shifted to one of continual alert, NCIS decision makers realized that there would be an ongoing need to coordinate counterterrorism efforts agency-wide. The command center that Pat Hagen had established would morph into the Counterterrorism Task Force and eventually the Counterterrorism Division. The Antiterrorism Alert Center would be expanded and renamed the Multiple Threat Alert Center, and the investigative work on the PENTBOM case, as the FBI called it, would continue for months and months to come.

Over at the rubble pile in Pentagon North Parking, the teams had gradually grown smaller as the

After maybe a day or two off, people went back to their day jobs. As one agent concluded, “Those were hard days! What a phenomenal team effort! When you look at the reconstruction, I’m humbled by what we able to accomplish and proud of what we did accomplish.”

# NCIS Responds



*"When we left the interstate and saw the Pentagon, it was even worse than we thought. We'd seen it on TV, but actually looking at it, there was no comparison."  
SA Dan Rice*

*"For three weeks, about all you could smell was jet fuel—that and everything that was burning."  
SA Royal Corbin*

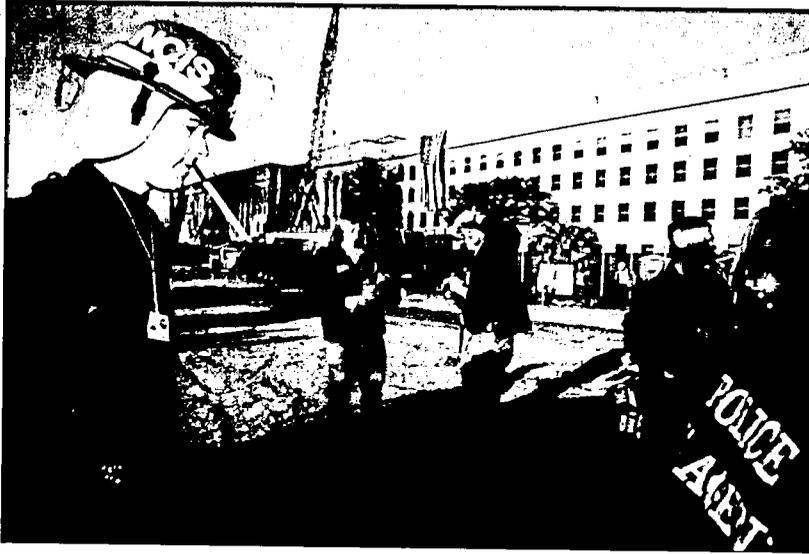


*"When SA (Mike) McLean played 'Amazing Grace' on his pipes it was so moving. A lot of people walked away with tears in their eyes."  
Marine Corps  
Gunny Sgt. Mary Odrick*



*"I remember reaching through the ashes to find things. The soot and rubble were burning hot, so that you'd have to step back and make sure your rubber boots weren't melting."  
SA Dan Rice*

*SA Erin Betro briefs the day shift before they enter the rubble pile.*

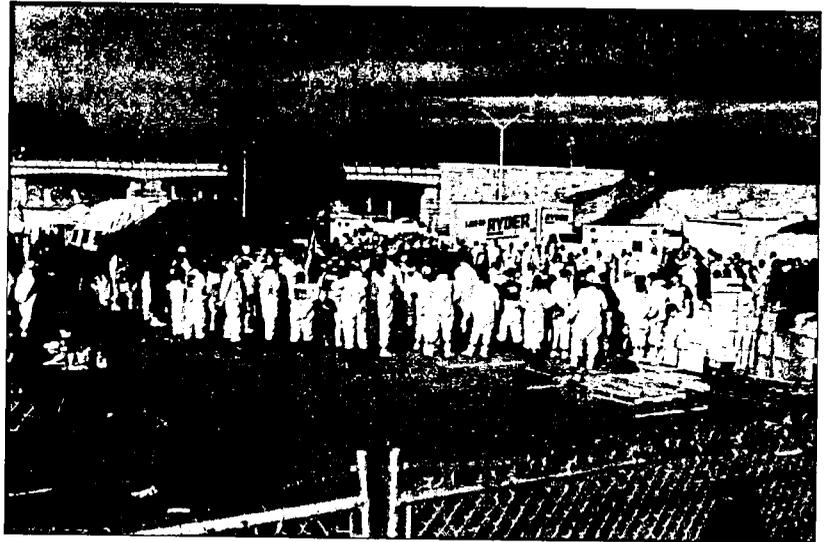


*"There were parts of the airplane everywhere. I clearly remember the part of the fuselage with the "American" from "American Airlines" sticking in the tower of the helipad (and) the burnt-out fire engine."*

*SA Patrick Meyer  
(Pictured at left).*

*"Prayer and humor during my Pentagon days fueled me every morning to get up, shower, brush my teeth, and face another day of oversized, hot Tyvek suits, sweaty and itchy HEPA Filters and pinching goggles that ripped my hair out by the roots. I could never find a pair of rubber boots that fit right."*

*SA Cindy Alvarez*



*"At the end of another backbreaking, sweltering, thumb-bending, wrist-breaking shift, we would hand clorox solution to each other, cut off the Tyvek suits taped to our bodies and boots, and grab Gatorade and bottled water for each other."*

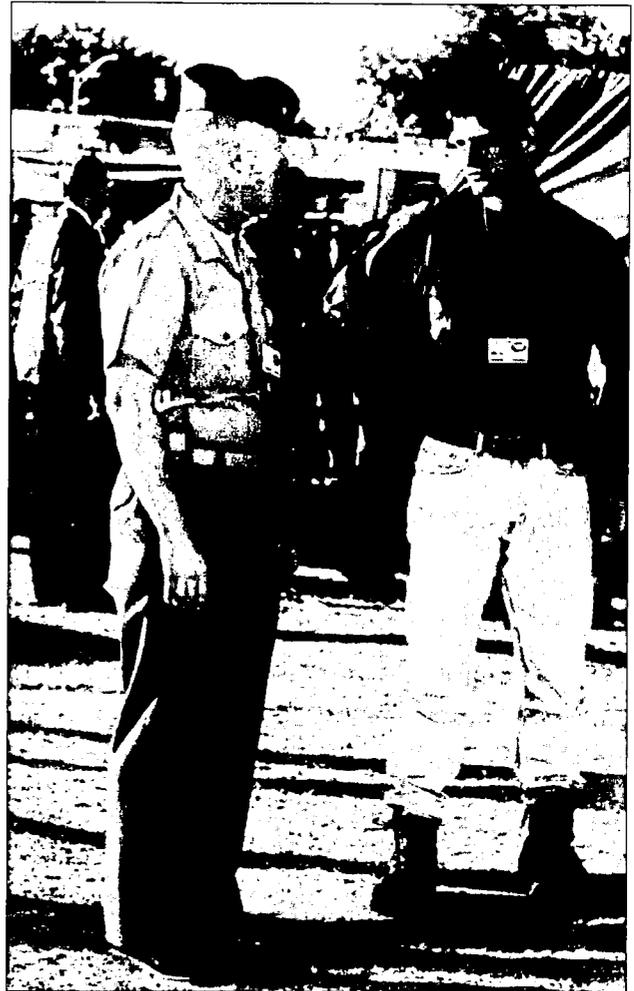
*SA Cindy Alvarez*



*From left to right: Shelly Amsden, Erin Betro, John Salazar and Bob Musti.*



*SA Shelly Amsden waits her turn on the rubble pile.*



*Lt. Col. Scott Street speaks with an unidentified USMC CID agent at Camp Unity.*



*Mike Sullivan and SA Rick McCue prior to their shift on the rubble pile.*

*"There was one woman whose name was on a lot of documents, and we were wondering if she made it. We found out later that she didn't."*

*SA Rick McCue*



*SAs Pete Hughes and John Tigmo brief Secretary England and Under Secretary Susan Livingstone at the site while SA David Cronk (center) looks on.*



*As day breaks over the Pentagon North Parking Lot, SA Frank O'Donnell prepares to put a new filter on his respirator.*



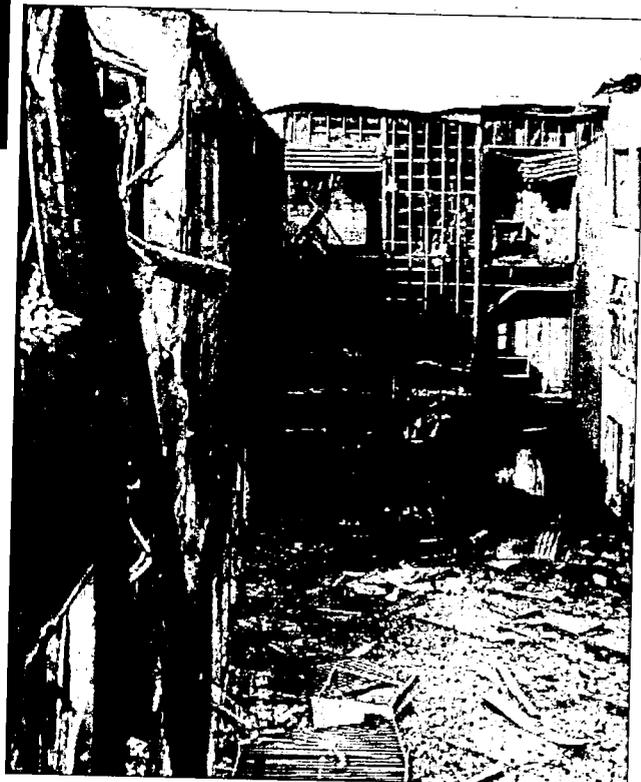
*IA Cheryl Beaird (NCISRA Quantico) provided tireless admin support at the Pentagon crash site.*

*"We picked up every scrap that was on the ground—every piece of metal, every piece of paper, every piece of brick. We picked up everything."*

*SA Patrick Meyer*

*"It was hot, like I'm sure a lot of places are that get burned up. It was quiet—even with everybody working. There was a certain silence to it. I wasn't that concerned about the building collapsing at the time."*

*SA Chris Compel*





*Secretary of the Navy Gordon England (center) poses with the day-shift supervisors, including NCIS SAs Pete Hughes (left) and Erin Betro (second from right).*



*President Bush greets SA Debbie Reese at the Pentagon as Secretary of Defense Rumsfeld looks on.*

## *Agencies and Organizations that participated in Operations Noble Eagle/Camp Unity*

*AFOSI  
ATF  
Arizona Search and Rescue  
Arlington County Fire Department  
Arlington County Police Department  
Armed Forces Institute of Pathology  
Chaplain services from Army, Navy and Air  
Force  
CNO N-34  
DCIS  
DEA  
Defense Protective Services  
DODIG  
Environmental Protection Agency  
Fairfax Co Fire Department  
Fairfax Co Police Department  
FBI  
FEMA  
Ft. Belvoir Fire/HAZMAT  
Ft. Myer Fire Department  
Montgomery County Search and Rescue  
National Red Cross  
National Transportation Safety Board  
NCIS  
NSA  
ONI  
Prince Georges County Search and Rescue  
Salvation Army  
Southern Christian's Mens and Womens  
Organizations  
Tennessee Search and Rescue  
US Army troops from Ft Myers and Ft. Belvoir  
USACID  
USMC CID  
Virginia State Police*



*"You thought about the loss the family had sustained, about how the person came to work in the morning—like we all did—and just wasn't coming home." SA Royal Corbin*

**M**y first few days, I was amazed by the damage to the Pentagon walls, just 100 feet in front of me. This was a place I'd spent weeks at on reserve duty and untold hours wandering the hallways during past visits with work or for pleasure. It was hard to believe what I was looking at. Burned out walls and charred interiors. It was even worse inside. Nothing remained within the impact area but wet, charred debris, most of it unrecognizable. Twisted metal; burned desks and filing cabinets; mounds of what was once wall or ceiling; nothing looked useable any longer. Initially, we assembled into search teams, looking for survivors or attempting to recover any remains that were in the impact zone. There was a lot of hurry up and wait; a lot of FBI "chiefs" trying to figure out what to do and when to do it. There were structural problems that made it impossible to enter certain parts of the building. Thank God for the attitude displayed by our NCIS team members. Sit, wait, sit, wait, enter, exit, sit, wait. That was the routine of being on a search/recovery team.

Although everyone initially hoped survivors would be located, it was not long before we all knew that only remains would be retrieved. Many of us would wait patiently to enter the building on a recovery team, only to be told the recovery efforts were again halted, pending further shoring up of the walls or the addition of structural supports. We even endured a bomb threat or two and had to temporarily evacuate the area, afraid we might become the next targets. We'd watch as the K-9's would enter and leave the impact zone, seeking only to find that person who had been unlucky enough to have

been too close to the crash site to escape.

As we entered the Pentagon, we were all struck by the darkness and the eerie silence in the smoke and water-filled hallways. Everyone pictures the Pentagon as vibrant, full of life. It was chilling inside. The only sounds were those of the team sloshing through the water on our way to the next section of the impact area. Slowly we

made our way throughout the water-filled hallways with flashlights until we reached a sun-filled courtyard between the rings. Here, the real work would begin, leaving us soaked in sweat, pulling our Tyvek suits to our waist and ditching our respirators.

During one particular search party, our team proceeded to the "punch-out" in hopes of finding the flight recorder. This was the term used for the area between the C and B rings where remnants of one of the jet engines had driven through the walls and come to rest in the concrete courtyard. It was truly amazing that even this far inside the Pentagon, everything

had been consumed by fire and explosion. Still in the early stages of the recovery effort, we stood at the mouth of the gaping hole left by aircraft pieces large enough to survive the initial impact. We had shovels, hoes, and wheelbarrows, nothing more. The courtyard reverberated with commands to "find the data recorder." You'd hear "Team One assemble here," or "Grab those

shovels." Eventually, the ATF brought a "bobcat" into the area and helped move the debris we excavated from the "punch-out" hole. Everyone inside was eager to help, willing to climb into that black hole and pull out what they could, in hopes of finding something, most notably the aircraft flight recorder. We

## *Search and Recovery*



*By SA Craig Covert*



*"It was chilling inside. The only sounds were those of the team sloshing through the water on our way to the next section of the impact area."*

pulled out the remains of office equipment; computers, desks, chairs, things you would normally associate with a work space, except these items were ruined. Most of it was burned, although occasionally we would retrieve something that had miraculously survived the heat and flame. Papers and documents by the thousands were pulled out and swept aside as we looked for the flight recorder.



*SA Craig Covert, pictured here with SA Bob Musti, rubs his aching head after 12 hours inside the Pentagon.*

We never did find the recorder. It was found by the night shift that same evening, as excitedly told to us during the next day's shift change. The NCIS agents on that particular team had a great sense of satisfaction and cheered themselves as victors, members of the team that had found the flight recorder. It was as if we were contestants in some unusual game, each vying for the lead in how many aircraft pieces we found, or how many human remains we had recovered. It wasn't that we were trying to be ghoul-

ish about the situation. Quite the opposite! We were there for a purpose—to find evidence of the crime and to help locate personal remains for grieving relatives. Aircraft parts, personal effects, classified documents, human remains, it didn't matter. The more we found, the more we felt as if we were accomplishing the mission at hand. In some sense, we felt as if we were solving this gigantic investigation by locating these things.

Every day ended with a comparative tallying of who had found what. I can still picture Cindy Alvarez and Andrea Hosken, Dan Carlin and Steve McMains, John Salazar, Frank O'Donnell and Shane Colvin, all digging away, long after a break was called, while teammates from FBI and ATF sat down to grab some Gatorade and quench their thirst. If there was any agency more dedicated to the recovery efforts, I never became aware of them.

Two weeks into the recovery, we moved into the North Parking Lot and sifted through the rubble piles transported from the impact scene. They would come down in dump trucks and trailers, to be dumped into huge piles within the fenced compound we were working.

The smell had become unbearable. You could always tell when a rubble pile had human remains in it. The winds would shift and that odor of death would permeate the area. After a few days in the rubble pile, cadaver dogs were finally brought in to sniff through the piles before we started our searches.

Initially, we attacked each pile as it was dumped. We'd pull aside the larger items, the twisted remains of desks or sheet metal. Then an ATF "bobcat" would spread the pile out, at which time a team of 10 to 20 agents would sift through with rakes and shovels, looking for the aforementioned items. Every so often, someone would call out for the mortuary team, and everyone would stop to see what had been found. A foot, a finger, or some hair. None of it looked real. It just wasn't what we all imagined we would find. Often, we would stop to rub the soot and mud off of an item, realizing it was a personal token from someone's desk. A name plate or a challenge coin. Flag stands, picture frames. Money. A wallet. An identification card. Things we all have on our desks and could never imagine losing to the impact of a crashing jetliner.

I'll never forget the last couple days in the rubble pile. We'd gotten used to the routine, though it couldn't compare to what the poor guys were facing in NYC. To think we only had five floors and fewer than 200 lost, compared to the trade towers, with hundreds of floors and thousands of victims. I felt pity for the officers and agents working that scene. We'd been



SA Bruce Knight orders breakfast after a 14-hour nightshift on the rubble pile in North Parking.

on site for roughly three weeks and it felt like an eternity. Anyway, the final few piles were being brought to the parking lot. Our teams had shrunk, and many of the participating agencies had packed up and gone home, their recovery efforts complete. However, no matter how many teams left the scene, the Red Cross and the Salvation Army remained, passing out chow and coffee, making sure we had plenty to drink. A day did not pass that we weren't provided sunscreen or bandanas to shade us from the sun. Those guys were the true heroes of the moment. We agents were doing our job, participating in the crime scene of the century, and getting paid for it. But those volunteers, doing what they did for free, made sure we were able to do the job. They are the ones who deserved the real thanks. Without them, a horrible situation would have been unbearable.

In closing, I would like to share a letter I found inside the Salvation Army tent the day we finished the crime scene. I think it best captured the feelings of the American public and the volunteers who supported our efforts at the Pentagon.

### THE FACES OF HEROES

*I saw the faces of heroes today. They were blank faces, exhausted faces, determined faces and forever scarred faces. They were the faces of men and women, young and old, black and white, from near and far, who were all brought together by that terrible Tuesday morning. Their faces told a story that words could not tell. Horror and destruction. Violence and death. Wreckage and rubble. These faces witnessed what they should never have seen. These are the faces of the search and rescue crews, the military, the various police agencies and other workers clearing the debris and recovering our loved ones, our friends, our neighbors and our fellow Americans who gave their lives for freedom. These are the faces that continue to do their duty and return to that horror that will be with them forever.*

*I was honored to be able to serve these heroes a few hot meals, a cold drink, a warm smile, a heartfelt thank you and a sincere prayer. They ate, they drank, they rested, and then with a determined face, they returned to that nightmare inside the Pentagon. I will always think of them, pray for them and ask God to let them see his face and pour out his mercy and love and strength upon them so they may face another day. Thank you to all those faces of courage and duty. The faces of heroes.*

Mike Davis

Sep. 17, 2001

# ***NCIS Pentagon Recovery Team September 11-28, 2001***

## ***Day Shift:***

*SA Cindy Alvarez  
SA Shelly Amsden  
IA Cheryl Beaird  
SA Erin Betro  
SA Dan Carlin  
SA Shane Colvin  
SA Chris Compel  
SA Craig Covert  
SA David Di Paola  
Lou Eliopoulos  
Inv Pat Gookin  
SA Bill Herzig  
SA Andrea Hosken  
SA Don Housman  
SA Pete Hughes  
SA Greg Huska  
SA Michelle Jackson  
SSGT Dave Kobie  
SA Rory Lynch  
SA John Marsh  
SA Rick McCue  
SA Steve McMains  
SA Pat Meyer  
SA Bob Musti  
SA Frank O'Donnell  
GYSGT Mary Odrick  
SA Billy Ozark  
SA John Salazar  
Michael Sullivan  
SA John Tigmo, Jr.*

## ***Night Shift:***

*SA Mark Albo  
SA Dwayne Beacham  
SA David Baldwin  
SA Thomas Brady  
SA Al Cabrelli  
SA Bruce Call  
SA Don Chapman  
SA Royal Corbin  
SA Pete Dowlen  
SA Darrell Gilliard  
SA Allison Grieshaber  
SA Mary Jones  
SA Bruce Knight  
SA Ray Koon  
SA Chris Macaluso  
SA Michael McLean  
SA William Neal  
SA Angelique Panaseny  
SA Kris Peterson  
SA Dan Rice  
SA John Sorrell  
SA Thomas Stroot  
SA Dawn Teague  
SA Phyllis Wade  
SA Travis Winslow*