

11 Sep 01

About 0920, 11 Sep, I exited the metro at the Pentagon stop. I had a scheduled meeting with my colleagues (I am an independent consultant) in the Army Deputy Chief of Staff for Logistics, (DCSLOG) contacts about 0930. We met in their newly renovated offices in 3D445-06. They had moved in August from their old spaces in 3D475. They informed me of the attacks on the World Trade Center. As the move was still new, their TVs were not yet hooked up and CNN was unavailable. Attempts to log onto the Internet to access CNN were unsuccessful as the Internet seemed unavailable.

We were beginning work when we heard and felt the explosion. We were sitting at a table between two new cubicles. The explosion shook our workspace and sounded like a role of thunder that was quickly cut off. At the time we were unaware it was a plane but the immediate interpretation was that it was an attack of some kind. As I recall, almost immediately, the speaker system was activated and the announcement to evacuate the building was made. No guidance was given on which way to evacuate, and I'm sure if there was more than one way out of the spaces as this was the first time I had been physically in the new offices. Also an alarm sounded, I'm not sure if it was the fire alarm. The evacuation was orderly but people moved quickly. I do not believe the power went out. (Later review of the location of the damage indicates we were evacuating toward the site of the impact.)

The group moved into the fourth corridor and turned to the right. I looked to my left and saw a wall of gray and black smoke rolling down the hall toward us. Injured began to emerge from this wall of darkness. I remember being passed by a man helping a Navy Captain who had blood running down his face and appeared to have suffered head injuries. These two exited one floor down the stairs and out through the courtyard.

My co-worker and I decided to move down to the second floor and head toward the second corridor to exit across the South Parking Lot. Though many personnel were moving out through "ground zero", we felt exiting through the Pentagon courtyard would not be a secure way to exit and could be a potential trap should another attack occur. We believed the Pentagon might still be a target. We exited out the second corridor exit and moved directly away from the Pentagon across South Parking toward the highway and Pentagon City Mall, constantly angling to the right. The damaged portion of the Pentagon came into view.

The damage appeared close to the helo pad. We could see the flames, smoke and the debris but were still not sure of the cause of the damage. Some discussion centered around the idea that there had been an accident, however, that idea was quickly dismissed due to the size and seriousness of the damage, and the Trade Towers attack.

Another helo appeared quickly and began to circle the area. It appeared to be a park service helo. It circled very low and continuously and added to the tension and the noise. Those trying to talk or use cell phones could not be heard over the noise.

Managers/senior officers began to quickly organize and conduct a muster in an attempt to account for their personnel. Many began by doing verbal musters and asking their personnel to tell them whom they had seen. Some had tablets of paper and were writing down names, including names of people not directly assigned to their divisions. Any one who had a cell phone was attempting to contact family or associates. Some were able to get through, most experienced difficulties. My phone system appeared

unable to access the network (Sprint). I believed the location, being in a depression surrounded by many buildings, prevented the signal from being accessed.

Security and rescue personnel were on the scene immediately and continued to push us back against the highway. About 30 to 45 minutes after the attack, a security person began to announce through a bullhorn to move away as there was another hijacked plane in the air and headed in our direction. The crowd began to move up and to the right, toward the Navy Annex. I ended up on 395, the highway overlooking the Annex. At that point I was able to contact my husband on my cell phone. However, this is the only call I was able to make and all other calls did not go through on the network.

Traffic was blocked in all directions on the highway. We stood, watching the building burn, watching the sky for not only another plane, but for military fighter planes that we hoped were on the way. We finally saw one lone jet, an F-15 or F-16, which flew over the Pentagon, and veered away to my left, going south and back east. News personnel appeared very quickly as well. They got past the police blocking the highways, pulled cameras and video cameras out of their trunks and moved off to cover the event. What appeared to be an FBI agent wearing a vest so stating, pulled up in a car on the highway, parked and got out of his car.

About 1130 the traffic began to filter back onto the highway. My colleague and I were offered and accepted a ride to my colleague's townhouse in Landmark. I went to the Vandorn Metro Station to return home to Springfield. The train was very crowded and announcements were made that the trains running in the direction of the Pentagon on the Blue and Yellow lines would not be stopping at the National Airport or the Pentagon stops.

I was home by 1230.

Once home I attempted to make more phone calls. The circuits were busy. I was unable to get a line out until late that night. My reserve unit activated the unit recall process and I made contact with most unit members quickly via email. I was also able to contact family and friends quickly via the Internet.

30 October 2001

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