

I am a Booz·Allen & Hamilton employee working on a contract with Space and Naval Warfare Systems Command (SPAWAR), Foreign Military Sales (FMS) Program Office. I provide direct administrative support to the Senior FMS Case Manager, United States Central Command. We share office space with the Navy International Programs Office Saudi Naval Programs Office. The office is located at 1215 Jefferson Davis Highway, Crystal Gateway 3, Suite 1301, Arlington. The location provides a panoramic view of Washington DC from the Capital Building to The Pentagon. The Pentagon is just under one mile on a direct line of sight and just over one mile by foot.

Shortly after 0900 on Tuesday, 11 September 2001 we heard of the first airplane striking the World Trade Center. We gathered in the office of the Royal Saudi Naval Forces Assistant Defense Attaché for Naval Affairs and began watching events unfold on the television just after the second airplane struck. Although stunned and shocked, we speculated among ourselves if there would or could be an attack on any of the buildings and monuments in Washington DC. I was not quite facing the window when the airplane swooped into The Pentagon and did not specifically see it. I saw the explosion and the large fireball that immediately followed. Two of our number said they believed they had seen a cylindrical object and thought it was a missile. We immediately began to evacuate the building. It was a tense and hectic few minutes. After ensuring that everyone was out of the office and moving down the stairs, Commander Mckeever, Rick Magalis and I remained and observed until mid afternoon.

Richard E. O'Neil