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Keith Bohn
December 17, 2001

Interview conducted by Janet McDonnell
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INTERVIEW WITH SERGEANT KEITH BOHN

CONDUCTED BY

DR. JANET MCDONNELL

DECEMBER 17, 2001

START OF TAPE

- Janet McDonnell: And maybe just if you would begin by explaining what your position is here, what's your sort of normal duty?
- Keith Bohn: My current position with the United States Park Police is I'm a helicopter pilot. I'm a pilot sergeant with the United States Park Police and work out of Anacostia station and fly helicopters basically fulltime. It is my fulltime job for them. I've been with them 18 years.
- Janet McDonnell: How did you first become aware of the attacks on September 11?
- Keith Bohn: On the morning of September 11, I was leaving work. I'd worked the previous midnight tour and I was preparing to leave work, already in civilian clothes. Already had known about, obviously, the World Trade Center attacks in New York. They were pretty traumatic and unbelievable. Was leaving work, walking through the hangar. Most of our crew was outside in either the hangar or the outside area when one of the crew members, Sergeant Virgil, had made mentioned about hearing some sort of explosion or something. We then received a phone on our drop line. We have a direct phone line to National tower because we're so close to them.
- Janet McDonnell: Is that what a drop line is?
- Keith Bohn: Yes, basically it's, we have a few drop lines here because of our mission, but one of them is from National tower because we work so closely with the airport being only a mile away from Reagan National Airport. And so, they called us reporting that, our first initial report is that an aircraft had crashed near the northern extreme of the airport property. So, we were preparing to launch a response to an aircraft crash on the northern end of the airport.
- Keith Bohn: At that point you could see the black plume of smoke from that area. You couldn't tell it was the Pentagon yet, but you could tell it was from the northern part of the airport there was in fact a huge black smoke cloud already coming up at which point my commander, Lieutenant Cholak, advised me to get suited up to prepare to go on the second aircraft for this mission.
- Janet McDonnell: Okay, the second aircraft being Eagle.
- Keith Bohn: Eagle Two. I was in Eagle Two. Eagle One launched out immediately with the duty crew of that day, which was Pilot Sergeant Galley, Sergeant Marsh, and Officer Dillon. That three-man crew launched in Eagle One immediately. The plan was to form a crew with what was here at the hangar, myself, Lieutenant Cholak, Sergeant Stasulli. Sergeant Virgil was

in training nearby with a large group of Park Police for the upcoming international money fund demonstrations, the IMF World Bank demonstrations. There was a group of about 50 people out in front of the hangar training. Horse mounted, motorcycle slot and personnel. So we were going to formulate a crew for Eagle Two from that group of people that were here, utilizing the mass casualty kit in Eagle Two, in which we have a kit for the aircraft which allows us to carry four patients versus two patients. Thinking we have an aircraft crash; we were thinking mass casualties. So, we launched Eagle One immediately with the intent of launching Eagle Two right afterwards with the mass casualty kit in.

Janet McDonnell: Okay. And so, compare for me the crew that you went up with, with what was a typical crew for a mission.

Keith Bohn: We were in a very atypical crew. What transpired was in fact that I had already come off midnight getting off duty, so I was one pilot. Sergeant Ken Burchell is another pilot, but he was assigned to this training. I'm still an intermediate paramedic and Sergeant Burchell is still an EMT, so we had medical expertise. My thought was that Sergeant Burchell would fly and I would be his medic and take care of patients. However, Sergeant Burchell went over to the training group while I started the aircraft, so I basically became the pilot of Eagle Two.

Keith Bohn: Sergeant Burchell knew that at the training group out here in front we had support from Department of Defense, which typically on major events the United States Park Police uses DOD medical personnel from Bethesda Naval Hospital. And so, he knew there were some paramedics over there from that operation, who support Park Police regularly, who are known to us, have trained with us. They've basically been trained on our aircraft and everything. He knew they were there, and he went to get them to tell them to come on the aircraft, which was a very good decision.

Keith Bohn: So, he returned with paramedic Jason Kepp, and physician's assistant Keith Keitell. Those two medical personnel were obtained by Sergeant Burchell and joined us, and we also took Lieutenant Cholak and Sergeant Stasulli with us. I knew I wanted some extra personnel for landing zone security, thinking we were going to be going in and out of this site, whatever it was. And so I wanted those personnel with me so we had some people on the ground that we could maintain landing zone security, we could have communications with them, and I know who I'm talking to when it's one of my own to say, "Yes, it's okay to come in and land now," or "We're not ready," or "Here's what's going on."

Janet McDonnell: But for a typical mission it's what, a two person?

- Keith Bohn: Our typical crew has been two. Since September 11, we've been running with a three-man crew which we would like to do because of the advantages it gives the operation. It's much safer and a much more capable crew to run with a three-man crew. On that day I launched with six, because I gathered a mixture of people thinking I had a large incident I needed extra personnel for both medical and for security things. And also, we had assistance on the ground from our mechanic who was here, Tom Greer, and he installed the mass casualty kit in the aircraft as we formed up this crew and got ready to launch.
- Janet McDonnell: And how easy or difficult was that to do?
- Keith Bohn: It's probably a 15-minute process, which could be done the scene, but I said, "Let's do it here," because - but we didn't take 15 minutes. I gave him about 5. And so, he was rushed, but we knew we had something extreme going on and then later we learned that it was very extreme.
- Janet McDonnell: So how many minutes after Eagle One took off did Eagle Two?
- Keith Bohn: We probably launched, I think, 5 minutes after them and actually that's how I found out what transpired. It was Sergeant Galley in Eagle One talking to me in Eagle Two on the air-to-air frequencies, because I was already up and running in Eagle Two. I got the engines started and everything was online. And he told me in disbelief that a jet had actually hit the Pentagon. That it wasn't at the end of the runway, it was actually now as we knew identical to the World Trade Center, which that picture up there as you think of it with the, our and NYPD's aircraft up there over the trade centers. And we knew then it was the same thing, another similar incident. Now we had a jet into the Pentagon, which as far as our response we could change nothing, but yet in our mind we knew it wasn't an accident. It wasn't just a coincidental accident at National Airport. It was an attack of terrorist nature and we were in a whole different ballgame at this point.
- Janet McDonnell: Were you also getting reports while you were still up in the air about other unaccounted for aircraft?
- Keith Bohn: Yes, a little bit later we had gotten that. After we had gone over and performed our MEDEVAC, we received information about the incoming fourth aircraft, which was the one that had crashed in Pennsylvania, how that one had turned its course. It was coming back, believed to be coming back to D.C. was the intent.
- Janet McDonnell: Okay. So, let's just sort of continue along somewhat chronologically. You're landing at the Pentagon.

- Keith Bohn: We actually then, because we had air-to-air between Eagle One, which was already over the scene, with us in Eagle Two they knew, Eagle One knew that we had the mass casualty kit. Eagle One was already in a command and control position over the Pentagon and they were down linking live time video back to command center, such as the Secret Service, the FBI, things like that that we attach our signal to. And so, they were already engaged in that, which was something everyone wanted to see, and so they were giving it to all of the federal law enforcement entities in town. They also knew we had the mass casualty kit in. If there were MEDEVACS to be done, we were the best aircraft to go in first. So, they cleared a landing zone for us and described an area where it was safe and clear for us to land on the west side of the Pentagon.
- Janet McDonnell: Is that what you mean by clearing the zone, flying over it and?
- Keith Bohn: Seeing it was pretty much empty of people. Now, of course, the Pentagon, you had an obviously a hectic thing where you had police and fire units rushing towards the Pentagon. You have people on foot rushing towards the Pentagon from the buildings like Navy Annex and Crystal City. You had all of those people rushing to the Pentagon to try and help. And you have an equal number of people rushing out of the Pentagon, because it's now been attacked and is on fire. So it was a real mix of people going both directions, but yet there was some, there was a pocket of open space that Eagle One had identified for us in the cloverleaf of the highway there, Route 29 at Army Navy Drive or something at the west side of the Pentagon, where I initially landed and deployed my people.
- Janet McDonnell: Just north of the Naval Barracks thing?
- Keith Bohn: Right, exactly. There's a cloverleaf there where the two highways intersect, and we landed in the northwest cloverleaf. And it actually worked out well then because Lieutenant Cholak escorted Keith Keitell, so we had a Park Policeman with a medical provider going together. And then Sergeant Virgil took Jason Kepp to another medical team. So, two-by-two they went out and Sergeant Stasulli stayed with me to safeguard the landing zone.
- Keith Bohn: I think a lot of people thought we were there to save them. There were people coming towards the aircraft and I would point out to Sergeant Stasulli, "Stop her." "Stop him." People obviously in various stages of disarray because they were—
- Janet McDonnell: You thought you were going to evacuate.
- Keith Bohn: Them, I think, some of them.

Janet McDonnell: As opposed to a medical.

Keith Bohn: Yes, obviously the confusion was pretty great. And so when we deployed our people, Sergeant Virgil has a long history of fire, EMS experience, got to what was apparently the triage center and found out there were eleven patients at that point who were reported to be transported by air, eleven priority one patients. And then I relayed that up to, both Sergeant Burchell who was telling them by radio and I was telling Eagle One by radio both, and then Eagle One started calling in other aircraft to assist, such as they called for the Maryland State Police. They called for MEDSTAR Hospital Center aircraft. They called for INOVA Fairfax Hospital's aircraft, Fairfax Police aircraft, all of these other local MEDEVAC.

Janet McDonnell: Because they knew there were eleven and that you could only.

Keith Bohn: Eleven at that point.

Janet McDonnell: Right.

Keith Bohn: And we could take presumably four, although we initially launched out of there with only two.

Janet McDonnell: Tell me about that. How did that come about?

Keith Bohn: As soon as we got there, there were patients that were ready to go and the patients we got were worthy to go. They were quite extremely burned. Most of the patients who were transported, at least that I saw, were burn patients. I guess presumably if you were in the aircraft or in the zone of the Pentagon that got actually struck your odds of survival were pretty limited. But if you were in those adjoining offices that burned, it was very - but it was a small number. I think there were thoughts on our side there would be lots of patients. There really weren't, I don't think, large numbers of patients.

Keith Bohn: We ended up getting two. Both were very large patients. In the stacking litter configuration, the litters fall down on one another. So, when they brought us the first patient, who was very large, I told them to put that one on the primary side where one goes. The second patient we thought was equal in size, so then that didn't allow the second litter to lie flat, so the second just became unusable to accommodate the first. The third position is actually up top pretty high, hard to put a big patient up that high and also a tighter position. The third patient actually wasn't ready to go, yet packaged in a format to go.

Janet McDonnell: What does that mean?

- Keith Bohn: They weren't properly secured.
- Janet McDonnell: Is there paperwork?
- Keith Bohn: No, there was no paperwork done. They weren't even on a backboard ready to get in the aircraft, so we made the decision just let's go. We had to let's launch and so, because these were very critical, those two patients.
- Janet McDonnell: And where did you take them?
- Keith Bohn: We took them to the Washington Hospital Center, which is the closest trauma center. It's also the local burn unit and these were straight up burn patients. I don't know what other injuries they had, but we knew they had burns.
- Janet McDonnell: Who makes that call typically about where you take patients?
- Keith Bohn: We do. Our medics onboard, and between myself and Sergeant Burchell, who came through the process here of being paramedics first before we were pilots here, and then working with Keith and Jason, who are very known to us, we knew we were going to the Washington Hospital Center. We had burn patients. We knew we were going. It was a very short, probably a three-minute flight up there.
- Keith Bohn: But at that point, we left half of our crew there. When I launched off of the scene, I was flying, Sergeant Burchell was tending to one patient, and paramedic Kepp was tending to the other patient. And the physician assistant, Keith Keitell, Lieutenant Cholak and Sergeant Stasulli stayed on the scene to assist on the ground with further patients, patient care, landing zone security, because right after us MEDSTAR came in. The MEDSTAR helicopter came in and landed. And they took one. And actually, of those eleven initial patients, only three were flown that I know of. There were no other MEDEVACS by air that I know of. There may have been some by the military later, but of that initial strike, early on, the first half hour, there were only three patients flown. And I don't know if that meant the other eight deteriorated that they were not treatable or salvageable or if they went by ground.
- Keith Bohn: I think there was some confusion on the scene whether are these patients the ones to fly, because there are more over there? I don't know if those over there ever became the big numbers that were anticipated, because I think there was, I don't know what the final numbers for this incident really were. The numbers of dead are pretty well known in the 180's I think, 185 or so on. But I don't know what the number injured was. I know some went by ground to the local hospitals over there, like Arlington Hospital and National Orthopedic.

Janet McDonnell: But that's the triage center's function?

Keith Bohn: Right. That is their function. And that was probably a mixture of Arlington County Fire Department. The Pentagon had their own EMS service. They were involved. I know they helped load patients. I know people in Army uniforms were treating and helped load patients. You probably had elements of Alexandria Fire, D.C. Fire, a whole mixed community of police, fire and EMS personnel were there, and we saw them all. So, we launched with our first two and then we cleared the hospital to come back for more.

Janet McDonnell: Before you go on there, can you just describe, you did sort of very quickly when you talked about people sort of rushing from the building and rushing toward the building. But can you tell me anything else about the scene when you arrived, or you know what your impressions?

Keith Bohn: It was crazy. Actually, we launched, we landed into this circle, this traffic grass area in this cloverleaf. And we sent our people out. And we were there, having people rushing over the hill and up over the hill, the scene there wasn't as visible. I could see the building and see it burning. But then Sergeant Burchell said, "We're ready to go. We have eleven. I want you to hop up here." So our plan was to make the cloverleaf, which it became pretty much for the whole day the staging area, and the roadway, a part of northbound Route 29 there, Arlington Boulevard I guess it's called or Memorial Boulevard, the loading area for patients. So, stage here, load here. So basically I put Sergeant Stasulli back on board and the two of us we launched, we picked up and went back over and landed again on the highway closer to the Pentagon and closer to where the patients were, because it would require a not so long carry of these patients from triage to the aircraft.

Keith Bohn: And then when I got there it was amazing, because now you could, I could see the Pentagon right next to me burning. People were coming out of the building with clothing on fire, ripping off burning clothes as they extricated themselves. You had firemen rushing in. You had people rushing out. You had people trying to secure areas for whatever they needed, whether it be FBI putting up crime tape for crime scene preservation versus the military. It was a real mismatch of people.

Keith Bohn: But at that point the building had this diagonally slash in it like a big 45-degree angle slit where the plane had gone in at that angle. And it was still pretty intact. And then while we sat there the building collapsed quite loudly and quite dramatically. The building caved in and that was pretty traumatic. And then until we get these two people onboard, we made the decision not to wait anymore. It's time to go. These patients were very

critical. My belief as of today some three months later is that I think one has died, I think the other one survived. But they were both very, very bad. I've been in EMS for over 20 years and these patients were very critical. So, and they weren't pretty. Burn patients are really not pretty. So, they were pretty severe patients. So, seeing them and taking them was a start of a crazy. I mean—

Janet McDonnell: So, you went, and you took them to the hospital, and you came back and then?

Keith Bohn: Actually, from the hospital we came back here.

Janet McDonnell: Oh, you did?

Keith Bohn: We came back here to pick up a Secret Service agent, which part of our role in town is that we do a lot of missions with the U.S. Secret Service, and we take what's called the role of, what's called the Huntman Aircraft which is for Presidential security. Secret Service wanted an agent airborne in the city.

Janet McDonnell: So, it's the same aircraft it just goes under a different designation?

Keith Bohn: A different name. And it indicates the Secret Service is onboard and doing that mission. Secret Service wanted people onboard. And so, we came back here and picked up that Secret Service agent to go with us. And then we returned to the Pentagon to assist with what we thought were those remaining patients. However, this time it brings you back to what you said earlier. We had this other problem of a fourth aircraft coming inbound. And National tower, right after we had launched, was abandoned.

Janet McDonnell: So, we're talking about a span of what maybe 15 minutes, the scenario that we're talking about?

Keith Bohn: You're probably talking 15 minutes and so much is happening, it's unbelievable. It's just like the more you think back the more you remember. Now it's three months later, and I remember more as we talk about it today. But this happened so quick because, you know, the World Trade Center brought your life to reality, boom. They're watching the first one, and then here comes the second one, and pretty much everyone saw that and then wow, and then we have something happening in D.C., and now we find out it's the same, it was just like this is way out there on the extremes of reality that even in law enforcement for 20 years you don't prepare for this.

Janet McDonnell: Right.

END OF SIDE A

START OF SIDE B

Keith Bohn: So, we, and probably in a span of 15 minutes later we now had a Secret Service agent on board and we're returning to the Pentagon.

Janet McDonnell: That's not a mission you can talk about I imagine.

Keith Bohn: No, and actually, yes, we actually did some of that and we didn't do some of that. But they just wanted someone airborne over the city because they didn't know what was next. And again, they timed it well, because when we got him airborne, more and more reports were filtering out about aircraft number four and it was still airborne.

Keith Bohn: National tower soon after we had launched was abandoned. And the reason they were abandoned is because they were in the smoke trail of the Pentagon. We had northwesterly winds that day. The smoke trail pretty much ran through the high tower of National Airport. Got in their air intakes and they had to abandon the structure. Not only was the air traffic shut down, but they had to abandon because of the smoke. So now they were gone. So they gave control of the air space to us, primarily Eagle One, and Eagle One and Eagle Two would discuss things about what we were doing, and then we actually involved, the next aircraft involved was probably the Metropolitan City Police aircraft. And then the MEDEVAC aircraft came in. And Eagle One handled that mission while we were doing the MEDEVAC stuff.

Keith Bohn: But upon return with the Secret Service agent onboard, thinking we were doing more MEDEVACS because we knew we had more patients, the underground operation of National Airport and the tower were reporting to us locations on this number four aircraft. That it had in fact turned back from Cleveland, was coming back towards D.C., had passed Pittsburgh.

Janet McDonnell: And you're getting this over the radio?

Keith Bohn: Over the air radio, our aircraft radio, right. And we were then giving that to some of our local people in town, telling the police that there is another aircraft in bound. And so, what are the targets in this town? Well, people, there's not much you can do anyway to protect the Monument, the Capitol, or the White House. But they did what they could do, which was minutes after the first attack hit in D.C., they evacuated the White House. I don't know what they did to the Capitol but, and the Monument, I think, was still shut down for renovations so there was no one in the Monument, I don't think.

Keith Bohn: But, so we were giving that information to our ground troops so that they knew. And actually, the tower recommended that we evacuate by air the area of the Pentagon because it was thought maybe it would be another second attack on the Pentagon. Since the first twin New York hit the World Trade Center, maybe the next two were going to hit the Pentagon, and who knows where five, six and so on were going to go.

Keith Bohn: So, they advised us to leave the Pentagon. So, we found, already during this day when I was passed at about 500 feet by a fighter jet, I knew it wasn't a normal day in the city. A fighter was down very low over the city, heading north to intercept the aircraft number four, actually. Me and Sergeant Burchell talked about, the good idea today would be to stay low. You don't want to be up high and be a hot target for anyone who may attempt to shoot down some of these things. So being low would be a much safer operation. But then they told us to evacuate the Pentagon area. We found refuge; we had to find someplace to hide, so we actually chose Memorial Circle, which is on the G.W. Parkway on the west end of Memorial Bridge.

Janet McDonnell: Now give me a sense of the timeframe for this. I mean you know you've been there, you've come back here, you've taken Secret Service up, gone back to the Pentagon?

Keith Bohn: We went around a few times. I think we circled the Pentagon anticipating landing when they said, "Evacuate." Boom, we cleared out. I'm thinking find a field, whether it be a high school football field, an empty church lot. I'd like it to be something I knew. Well, the George Washington Parkway was shut down. They shut down all of the bridges in town. I remember there was like an abandoned car on Memorial Bridge which caused a lot of concern thinking this was part of the package. But Memorial Circle was pretty much empty. We had some officers on the west end I could see, but they were nowhere near the circle. So, it was a big, safe, empty field. We just landed it. We said, "Let's get down." And the odds of this plane if it's coming inbound, if it's going to be piloted into something, it wasn't going to be piloted to the open expanse of Memorial Circle, so being there would be safe.

Keith Bohn: So, we landed there and then we were just waiting it out, so to say, until we knew the threat had passed. And it wasn't that much longer until number four crashed in Pennsylvania. But we were getting calls then for additional patients. So, we left and came out from Memorial Circle. We went back into the Pentagon. And—

Janet McDonnell: Calls for additional patients being MEDEVAC'D.

- Keith Bohn: Patients MEDEVAC'D out. At this time there were other aircraft there. Fairfax Hospital's aircraft was there. Eagle One had given up, I think, air control to the city police in Condor One, so they had landed for MEDEVAC. When we landed again, again I deployed my medics. There were no patients. When we got to triage there were none. And I don't know what that means per se. I just know we didn't do any more MEDEVACS that day. But we went airborne and did some stuff. I know Eagle One flew the fire chief for a, and they'll tell you more about that, about checking the fire, and fighting the fire, and getting some, how big of a fire it was at the Pentagon.
- Keith Bohn: And then we came back here, refueled, and then we got involved in an FBI mission, where we picked up FBI personnel at the National Mall downtown, flew them to Dulles Airport to start the investigation. And at this point, the town was full of military aircraft. And it wasn't a real comfortable feeling, because communications was not as good as it is between civilian operators here. We work together all of the time. And there was some concern over what these aircraft were intending to do. You had everything from airborne refuelers up high, jets, military helicopters coming in in droves now. So, we made the decision to come back here and sort of plan our day from here versus from airborne in the mix. So that's what we pretty much did.
- Janet McDonnell: And what about the following couple of weeks? What were some of the tasks that Eagle Two performed? Did you continue to fly on Eagle Two those next weeks?
- Keith Bohn: We did a mixture. What we did is after that we set up dual staffing on both aircraft 24-hours-a-day using 12-hour shifts. We had three people on each aircraft. Two three-man crews on day work for Eagle One and Two, and two aircrews on midnight for Eagle One and Two. And I stayed on midnights and I'm still on midnights. For a while there we were working 12-hour days, no days off for the first two or three weeks after. And then we tried to work in one day off a week per person by using some sort of rotation. And then now we're back into where we work primarily 4-5 days a week, 12-hour shifts, and you get maybe two days off a week.
- Keith Bohn: In a threat level sense this event has been on a roller coaster, highs and lows. I think to keep threat levels high and have maximum staffing, whether it be in our ground troops at memorials and monuments or us in the aircraft, requires extra funding. And the question is where is the money coming from, this big terrorism money now? That's all well and good if it's there. So, and then you also get to a point of how much can you work people before you start losing some payback? You can go a week or two of high intensity. But when you go a month or two of high intensity, then

you mix in the holiday season, you start losing some things. People need some time off.

Janet McDonnell: And you don't want tired pilots.

Keith Bohn: You don't want tired pilots. And we don't want tired aircrew of any type because they are so critical to our operation to make it safe, to see out the left window, to run the things. And because there are so many things going on in this town now, such as other aircraft, you want to be more attentive to the air space, and so we got into a little mix now where people are getting time off. If people want a day off, they can get it. And we're still trying to maintain a higher level of readiness than we did before September 11, and I think we do. We're still maintaining a one three-man crew per day 24/7. And sometimes we have more people, like on day work we typically have some administrative personnel who can assist. On nights we may be down to three.

Keith Bohn: And we're still doing, you know, now it's like this roller coaster of intelligence coming in where we've all heard it, where publicly they'll say, there's a new threat that's supposed to hit Wednesday. A threat of a truck bomb coming to D.C., or the threat of bridges being blown up, or—And then you have periods of like high travel, like the Wednesday before Thanksgiving would be a very good time to disrupt this town. We're here a week before Christmas Eve, another good time to disrupt this town. There's lots of discussion, loose discussion, that since in Afghanistan we didn't really pay much attention to their religious holiday, beware on our religious holiday which is coming. And we're in the middle of Hanukah now, Christmas next week, New Years; we have all of these things coming up that would make a very public statement to take some sort of action, unfortunately, on those days. So, who knows?

Keith Bohn: I think it's just, obviously, the events of September 11 have changed our life individually to us in certain ways, but also as a country in major ways. Things are going to change and should change. Some of the changes are good. Some may not be so good. Some are painless. Some are going to be painful.

Janet McDonnell: So, were there more increased, I guess, patrol missions?

Keith Bohn: Yes, and also there were not only patrol missions, but responses to anything. Any verbalized concern was checked out, from a citizen saying, "I saw a box on Wilson Bridge," to "I saw a kid on Douglas Bridge," now became something that not only aircraft, but ground units would scramble to. And we did a lot of chasing of our tail that day looking for—

Janet McDonnell: But also, in the weeks after?

Keith Bohn: Yes, even still, I think, there is still that higher. We did a lot of patrol times. Checking out things of, thinking of terrorists, us watching the White House, the Monument, the Capitol, the Lincoln, and the Jefferson Memorials, all of those high visibly, publicly known structures. There's not much we can do by monitoring the Washington Monument. But if you want to disrupt this city and the Nation's Capital, well, you have bridges. Take out a few bridges and this town is locked up. You take out a few train yards maybe, or metro sites, or airports, which are still. National Airport was the last one to open and people don't understand why. Well, if you live here you understand why, because it's right there.

Keith Bohn: And so, yes, we did a lot of patrol of all of those intertwined operations, from public transportation to, you know, visitation where visitation was probably down. We're trying to protect visitors in D.C. It wasn't probably a popular time to come to town, although if you had plans of your trip, it's hard to break.

Janet McDonnell: That's right. So, is there something about the unit's response or your response, personally, if you want to take that approach, something about the response that you know that you're particularly proud of?

Keith Bohn: Oh, I'm proud to have done the most I could using the training I received from the government, primarily, to do everything I could. I've been involved like I said in EMS since the '70's, and I've been involved with the U.S. Park Police for 18 years. I've been with the Park Service even longer. I've been involved with this aviation operation here for roughly I guess 12 years now. But when it happened, I was here, and I did everything I could. Everything I was trained to do I did. We did what we were supposed to. We're supposed to respond to those things.

Keith Bohn: Some people would look at it later, was it stupid? Well, yes, but I know that at least one of the patients I flew is still living, so I had some impact. We helped maybe in whatever, getting, like Eagle One did some of this firefighting stuff from above or coordinating police responses. And we helped in the way we were capable of helping by being above, by shooting back that down link, by directing police and fire and EMS units, by landing and helping, by providing not only personnel but taking patients. And I felt really good that after it ended there was nothing else I could have done.

Keith Bohn: I didn't want to have done anything when that night or that day sort of wound down. At 4:00, 5:00 in the afternoon was probably when it really wound down for us. I flew about just over three hours that day, airborne, which is a pretty substantial day for us. And I felt when the day ended that there was nothing else I could have done. I did what we're supposed to do.

This is what the government puts not only the equipment here for but us here for and I did everything I could.

Janet McDonnell: Was there anything particularly challenging? As you pointed out, you've got quite a bit of experience with other types of responses. Was there anything particularly challenging about this one? I mean it sounds like there was, but—

Keith Bohn: Well, there was a concern, and we talked about Eagle One and Two, we had this air conversation about not flying in the smoke. We've flown in smoke before, whether it be woodland fires, or car fires, or building fires. But in this case, we knew it was a terrorist induced fire, so we didn't know what was in that smoke. And that maybe part of the reason National Airport's tower was so quickly abandoned because smoke is smoke, but smoke from a terrorist laden aircraft is questionable. So, we didn't fly into the smoke. So, you had to be very cautious of that.

Keith Bohn: Then you had fighter aircraft at 500 feet over the city traveling at high speeds. I mean that was a little bit concerning. And then you involve a large number of aircraft, period. When we fly with the city police, or MEDSTAR, or Fairfax Hospital, or Maryland State Police, we fly scenes with them all of the time. Those - but we don't particularly fly with military aircraft all of the time. And everybody has their own mission. We have our mission and they have their mission, and we just wanted to make sure everything went safely. We don't want to have an air to air crash, or we didn't have on the ground. The ground—

Janet McDonnell: So, did radio communications, I mean civilian, I'm going to display some ignorance here about air traffic and communications, but are both the civilian side and the military on the same radio frequency?

Keith Bohn: Sometimes.

Janet McDonnell: I mean how does that communication go?

Keith Bohn: For air-to-air, for air traffic control, yes, you all have to use the same frequency when National tower is operational. But now you take National tower out of the operation and they pass control to us. Now we have aircraft coming in. There was a little bit of a lag between when National tower shut down to when National approach, as it's called, took over, and from underground. And they could see radar scopes of when you have an aircraft coming up the Potomac River, what is it? Who is it? And you start getting reports like that. There was a little bit of a lag in that. So, until then it was visual.

- Keith Bohn: And when this jet passed me at 500 feet, Sergeant Burchell was in the left seat, he told me, "Don't come left. There's a jet coming right at us." And he went screaming by us, and as typical when you, in aircraft you try to keep him in sight, so I tried to turn left to keep him in sight and he just, boom, was gone. I mean he was heading out somewhere quickly. So now you get aircraft flying at a few hundred miles an hour in this city, where aircraft are traveling anywhere from 60-160 miles per hour. But slower traffic and - the air traffic got so maddening that actually Eagle One and Two sort of agreed it was time to pull back a little. There was nothing more we could do at this point. The patients were all gone. The scene was secure. The fire fighting was ongoing. We had responded to every little threat we possibly could, this bridge, that building, anything. People on top of a roof that day weren't really a comfortable position for people like the Secret Service to have.
- Keith Bohn: Then there was all of this stuff, "Well, where is everybody?" There was this big thrust to get some people out of town, as far as high-ranking government officials. The President was obviously not in town, luckily. So, there were all of these things going on. It was just, even on the ground you had all of these people running around, such a mishmash of people. If I landed on a MEDEVAC scene today, there's landing zone security. I'm landing with trained fire and EMS personnel, and police that know how to utilize us. There's not a lot of citizen interaction with that. But on that day, there were photographers, media, concerned people running to find out about family members, concerned people getting out of the Pentagon. There was all of this stuff going on. And I think it made for a - I was probably much more intent about having Sergeant Stasulli my only ground support because everyone else was doing things, trying to coordinate the safety of that scene.
- Janet McDonnell: Because as you pointed out earlier, they were actually approaching the aircraft, some of them.
- Keith Bohn: Yes, some of them seemed to be coming to us. And I think that, you know, some people were probably well intentioned, maybe coming to the aircraft for medical equipment or to help. Some were thinking it was their ticket out.
- Janet McDonnell: Sure.
- Keith Bohn: If this town is going to be devastated, getting on an aircraft, and getting out is probably a good idea to some people. Whereas we, fools rush in, we certainly did. We went over quickly and did what we could. And I think we were helpful. I think we helped a variety of people from police, fire, EMS, and patients, etc.

Janet McDonnell: So, it sounds like the decision to have this few extra bodies on the helicopter was really a smart decision then?

Keith Bohn: Yes, we were very fortunate. We were very fortunate that it was 9:00 on a weekday and that we had people like myself, who were still here and going somewhere that morning, from midnights hanging over. We had administrative personnel here. We had a trained group up. All of those 50 other officers were sent there, too. They immediately went over and secured all of the George Washington Memorial Parkway. Shut down, some people who were out there actually went into the Pentagon, some of our motorcycle officers. The motorcycle officers had the bend for getting through traffic, which it was locked down in this city right after it happened. They were able to get through traffic and they were actually pulling fire hose in the Pentagon with fire fighters, unprotected police officers.

Keith Bohn: It was really, I think, the New York operation gets a lot more publicity than the Pentagon operation, because it was so much larger, such a larger extent, and such a larger operation from the Pentagon. But it was just the same here. You had everyone from police, fire, and EMS, to Joe Citizen helping out doing whatever he could. And it was pretty, like I said, pretty traumatic, and dramatic, and everything, you know, that it's going to have an impact long term for anybody who was—

Janet McDonnell: Who isn't.

Keith Bohn: Whatever you were doing on September 11, that morning you probably know.

Janet McDonnell: Yes, all right. I appreciate you taking the time to talk about it.

Keith Bohn: Oh, my pleasure.

END OF TAPE