

NATIONAL GUARD BUREAU
Historical Services Branch

Interview NGB-03

INTERVIEW OF

LTC JAMES COYNE
G-4 42nd Infantry Division

CONDUCTED BY

MAJ LES MELNYK
National Guard Bureau

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Written corrections to transcript submitted by LTC
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TAPE TRANSCRIPTION

P R O C E E D I N G S

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MAJ MELNYK: This is MAJ Les Melnyk, the Army National Guard Historian at the National Guard Bureau, and I am interviewing LTC James M. Coyne. That's C-o-y-n-e.

LTC Coyne, you have -- this interview is taking place on the 19th of September 2001, Battery Park, New York City.

LTC Coyne, please, if you would, you have read and signed the access agreement for oral history materials and agreed to release everything in this interview for the Army's use.

LTC COYNE: Yes, I have.

MAJ MELNYK: Could you state your name, your rank, your duty position, and briefly describe what you do both in the civilian world and the background of your military?

LTC COYNE: Okay. My current position is I'm the G-4 for the 42nd "Rainbow" Infantry Division.

Most of my duties recently have been planning for our current war fighter exercise at Fort

1 Leavenworth. I have been in this position since
2 February of '01.

3 Prior to that, I had spent four and a half
4 years as the division's G-2.

5 **MAJ MELNYK:** And civilian?

6 **LTC COYNE:** Civilian, I worked for General
7 Electric for 32 years and retired in 1997.

8 **MAJ MELNYK:** Where do you live, sir?

9 **LTC COYNE:** I live in Saratoga Springs, New
10 York.

11 **MAJ MELNYK:** So you're upstate.

12 **LTC COYNE:** I guess we're apple knockers.

13 **MAJ MELNYK:** You're apple knockers. Could you
14 describe for me what you were doing, how you learned of
15 the attack, your immediate actions upon learning of the
16 attack on September 11?

17 **LTC COYNE:** On September 11, I was at Fort
18 Leavenworth, Kansas, participating in a Warfighter
19 seminar, and we were sitting in a classroom when the
20 messages came in first that the tower number one had
21 been hit by an aircraft.

1 And most of us had thought that it's possibly
2 an accident. And then about a half hour later, we
3 learned news that the second tower had been hit, and it
4 appeared that this had been an act of terrorism.

5 And what we did pretty much then was stood
6 fast for about an hour or two and made a decision that
7 - [Major] General Garrett, our division commander made
8 the decision that we should redeploy to New York.

9 What we did is we contacted the Kansas
10 National Guard and they made arrangements for us to
11 have bus transportation back to Troy, New York.

12 **MAJ MELNYK:** How many individuals from the
13 division staff were at the Warfighter seminar?

14 **LTC COYNE:** I believe, off the top of my head,
15 there were about 90 of us. That included cells from
16 the various MACOMs [Major Commands] within the
17 division.

18 **MAJ MELNYK:** So you -- bus transportation for
19 all the New Yorkers back to Troy. What time did you
20 arrive back in Troy at division headquarters?

21 **LTC COYNE:** I would have to think for a

1 second, because I believe we left Kansas about 1700
2 Central [time] and arrived back in Troy about 1500 the
3 following day, Eastern time.

4 **MAJ MELNYK:** So Wednesday, about 1500.

5 **LTC COYNE:** Correct.

6 **MAJ MELNYK:** Were you apprized of what was
7 going on in New York during that time? What did you
8 know?

9 **LTC COYNE:** About the only thing I knew is I
10 had a Walkman that had radio capability that I was
11 listening to and picking up bits of information.

12 **MAJ MELNYK:** But no knowledge about the Guard
13 being mobilized or who was in control or what units
14 were deploying.

15 **LTC COYNE:** No, we did not. We just had some
16 assumptions.

17 **MAJ MELNYK:** Were you aware if General Garrett
18 or anyone else was in touch with command back here?

19 **LTC COYNE:** Yes. What General Garrett had
20 done is sent a quartering party forward in a couple
21 vans, and they actually arrived only a couple hours

1 ahead of us, and he was in contact with them and,
2 again, we were just picking bits of information from
3 the local media.

4 **MAJ MELNYK:** When you arrived back in Troy,
5 were you still on active -- were you then placed on
6 state active duty? What was your status? What did the
7 division staff do when they got back?

8 **LTC COYNE:** We were still on ADSW for our trip
9 to Kansas, which was culminating on Friday. So we
10 remained in that status till Friday afternoon, when
11 myself and eight other individuals were put on state
12 active duty to come down to Battery Park in lower
13 Manhattan to assist the Aviation Brigade, which was
14 going to be the C&C [Command and Control] for the
15 battalions that had been mobilized.

16 **MAJ MELNYK:** Between your return on Wednesday
17 and deploying down on Friday, setting up on Saturday,
18 you said, what did you do?

19 **LTC COYNE:** Pretty much what we did was
20 continue to get bits and pieces of information from the
21 units that had been mobilized and we were continuing

1 with writing our order for the war fighter exercise.

2 **MAJ MELNYK:** So you continued -- were you part
3 of the emergency operations center or was there
4 emergency operations set up at division headquarters?

5 **LTC COYNE:** There was an EOC set up on
6 Wednesday night and, yes, I participated in part of
7 that, as did all the staff sections.

8 **MAJ MELNYK:** You took shifts.

9 **LTC COYNE:** Correct.

10 **MAJ MELNYK:** Great. And what -- did the EOC -
11 - were they involved in directing actions down in New
12 York City or simply monitoring activities?

13 **LTC COYNE:** Right. We were monitoring
14 activities and we were also receiving information from
15 the state EOC.

16 **MAJ MELNYK:** And the state EOC is located --

17 **LTC COYNE:** In Latham, New York.

18 **MAJ MELNYK:** In Latham, as well. Who was
19 running the operation down in New York? What was your
20 understanding of the command situation?

21 **LTC COYNE:** The 53rd Troop Command took the

1 command and control of the divisional units and the
2 units under their control, and they were operating out
3 of Valhalla.

4 **MAJ MELNYK:** So when you arrived on the
5 ground, was it Friday?

6 **LTC COYNE:** I arrived Saturday.

7 **MAJ MELNYK:** Saturday. What were your first
8 actions? Where did you first come in? Did you
9 coordinate first with 53rd Troop Command and go to
10 Valhalla?

11 **LTC COYNE:** I coordinated through the Aviation
12 Brigade Commander, who was also with me.

13 It was kind of an interesting situation,
14 because before leaving Troy or while leaving Troy, we
15 went to the Latham facility first to pick up the gear
16 for the Aviation Battalion, which had theirs in the
17 Latham Airport, because of the fact that they had
18 redeployed from Fort Polk, coming out of the JRTC.

19 So what I did is I brought two five-ton
20 Expando-vans with me for the Aviation to use as their
21 command post, picked up their gear, and came

1 immediately to Battery Park.

2 **MAJ MELNYK:** Normally, all their material
3 would be located on Long Island, where brigade
4 headquarters is.

5 **LTC COYNE:** That's correct.

6 **MAJ MELNYK:** And you weren't picking up
7 aircraft, but headquarters gear.

8 **LTC COYNE:** Yes. We were picking up mainly
9 their TOC equipment, i.e., field desks, situation
10 boards, and personal equipment.

11 **MAJ MELNYK:** Okay. And so you and your party
12 brought that down and married up with the rest of
13 Aviation Brigade.

14 Was there any particular reason why you, a
15 member of the division staff, was selected to integrate
16 with the Aviation Brigade staff?

17 **LTC COYNE:** Yes. The decision was made by the
18 CG [Commanding General, i.e., MG Garrett], because our
19 immediate thought was their needs would be in the one-
20 four area, where -- you know, upon mobilization, we've
21 learned, with our experience with state active duty,

1 that initially the one-four is the area that's the
2 heaviest concentration with missions.

3 **MAJ MELNYK:** So Aviation Brigade provided
4 which -- did they also provide a slice of one-four
5 personnel?

6 **LTC COYNE:** Oh, yes. We were coming down to
7 augment them, participating in the heavy work load.

8 **MAJ MELNYK:** When you came on the ground
9 Saturday, you brought your Expando-vans where?

10 **LTC COYNE:** Right here to Battery Park.

11 **MAJ MELNYK:** Right here to Battery Park.

12 **LTC COYNE:** And, also, we brought generators
13 so we could provide power to them.

14 **MAJ MELNYK:** You were integrated into the
15 staff there. What function have you served since
16 Saturday? Has that changed or remain constant?

17 **LTC COYNE:** I have remained acting as the four
18 for the Aviation Brigade, because what they did with
19 their own S-4 was put him out as one of the LNOs
20 [Liaison Officers] in the area.

21 **MAJ MELNYK:** To the area. Who is he liaisoned

1 to?

2 **LTC COYNE:** I believe MAJ Redgrave has been
3 working with the 258th Artillery.

4 **MAJ MELNYK:** So the Aviation Brigade chose to
5 take the staff officers and push them out to the
6 battalions.

7 **LTC COYNE:** That's correct.

8 **MAJ MELNYK:** How did you find the situation on
9 the ground? What kind of command and control existed
10 when you set up here and what function did you perform
11 by establishing an additional headquarters here?

12 How did you assist in that command and
13 control?

14 **LTC COYNE:** Well, when I arrived here, it was
15 pleasantly calm, to say. The Aviation commander had
16 already brought some of his staff before he arrived.

17 **MAJ MELNYK:** This is COL Meskill.

18 **LTC COYNE:** COL Meskill, right. And his staff
19 had been coordinating with the battalions the best they
20 could, considering they really didn't have C2 nodes to,
21 you know, talk to everybody they needed.

1 **MAJ MELNYK:** Right.

2 **LTC COYNE:** So I think our first sense of
3 urgency was I had the enlisted people set up the TOC
4 operations and then we proceeded to get whatever
5 communications equipment we could, which mainly was the
6 cell phone.

7 **MAJ MELNYK:** So as I understand it, you were
8 inserted as an additional control and headquarters
9 between Valhalla, the one on the 53rd Troop Command,
10 and the battalions on the ground.

11 **LTC COYNE:** Yes. As I say, I was pretty much
12 embedded into the brigade staff.

13 **MAJ MELNYK:** If you can recall, and I realize
14 you didn't bring any notes with you, what units were on
15 the ground at that time?

16 **LTC COYNE:** When I arrived here, it was the
17 69th Infantry Battalion, the 258 Artillery Battalion,
18 the 101 CAV, and the 642 DASB, and two companies, B and
19 C, from the [1st Battalion, 105th Infantry of the] 27th
20 Brigade.

21 **MAJ MELNYK:** How has that changed since your

1 arrival?

2 **LTC COYNE:** Since our arrival on Saturday, on
3 -- again, I'm pretty sure it was Tuesday that the 69th
4 rotated out and the 204th Engineers backfilled them.

5 **MAJ MELNYK:** It was -- they rotated out Sunday
6 night and Monday.

7 **LTC COYNE:** Okay.

8 **MAJ MELNYK:** They rotated out of their armory.
9 I was with the 69th. So just for the purpose of the
10 time line.

11 **LTC COYNE:** Yes.

12 **MAJ MELNYK:** I realize the sense of time here
13 for everybody I have interviewed has been a little
14 unsure.

15 **LTC COYNE:** It's our best guess of what day it
16 is.

17 **MAJ MELNYK:** Other units have been arriving
18 from upstate to help fill in on the effort?

19 **LTC COYNE:** No, there have not been any other
20 additional units. I know there is a plan that is being
21 put into place right now to relieve units on this

1 coming Saturday and, of course, you need a day to do a
2 battle handoff.

3 **MAJ MELNYK:** Working in the one-four shop,
4 what have been the key problems that you've had to
5 tackle since arriving on the ground Saturday?

6 **LTC COYNE:** I think a couple of the issues
7 I've had to work with, one is kind of a special one is
8 respirators for our soldiers and we've been able to do
9 a fairly good job.

10 We've had cooperation from the New York Fire
11 Department and from the emergency management operation
12 in assisting us with that.

13 The other thing I would say is probably cots
14 have become a problem. I think we've finally got our
15 arms around that and everyone has a cot to sleep on.

16 We've also received an awful lot of assistance
17 from the PD and the City of New York in regard to
18 subsistence, as far as water and meals and things like
19 that.

20 It took us about a day to get our arms around
21 that situation and to get caterers and now our soldiers

1 are getting hot meals instead of what I may call
2 handouts.

3 **MAJ MELNYK:** Though the handouts have been
4 very generous.

5 **LTC COYNE:** Absolutely.

6 **MAJ MELNYK:** That's what everybody has said.

7 **LTC COYNE:** It's been outstanding.

8 **MAJ MELNYK:** You said that relations with the
9 civilian agencies are good.

10 Who is conducting that liaison? Can you
11 describe, in any kind of way, the formal structure of
12 that? Who is giving the orders and how is Aviation
13 Brigade involved in that?

14 **LTC COYNE:** Currently, the area is broken into
15 five sections and the -- each liaison officer has a
16 meeting each morning with me -- and I know in section
17 one, the New York Fire Department is controlling that
18 area.

19 **MAJ MELNYK:** Section one is ground zero.

20 **LTC COYNE:** Right. And the other four areas
21 are handled by the New York City Police Chiefs. And

1 what they do is they have a morning and an evening
2 meeting with our liaison officers to coordinate our
3 efforts and what they need.

4 **MAJ MELNYK:** And the liaison officers are --
5 for those meetings, are all coming out of Aviation
6 Brigade.

7 **LTC COYNE:** No. They've been augmented,
8 initially, even before the Aviation Brigade arrived.
9 Some division staff officers who live here in New York
10 City did an immediate response, and were probably the
11 guys that actually the Aviation Brigade linked with
12 initially were a couple of the liaison officers that
13 were already on the ground.

14 **MAJ MELNYK:** Anyone in particular that you
15 want to talk about?

16 **LTC COYNE:** Yes. I'd say MAJ Bob Magnanini
17 and MAJ George Chin were two of the first to offer
18 their services and, again, are still on the ground
19 here.

20 **MAJ MELNYK:** And MAJ Magnanini, what role did
21 MAJ Magnanini and MAJ Chin -- they are both on division

1 staff?

2 **LTC COYNE:** Correct. And they live in the New
3 York City area and both of them were close enough to
4 what we'll call ground zero, I guess, to realize the
5 urgency of the situation and immediately deployed to
6 the area to offer their services to whoever was in
7 command and control.

8 **MAJ MELNYK:** What has your impression been of
9 the performance of the units that you've seen? I
10 realize that you're mostly in the one-four shop, but
11 you've gotten glimpses of the soldiers.

12 **LTC COYNE:** I would say that whatever my
13 opinion may be is a little biased, but from the
14 feedback we've gotten from the police, the fire
15 department, and everyone like that, we've done an
16 outstanding job.

17 **MAJ MELNYK:** Sir, if you could address the
18 issue of command and control. I have spoken to several
19 people who, especially early on in the operation, had
20 problems with the command and control, as emanating out
21 of Troop Command.

1 And you arrived later on the scene and things,
2 by the time Saturday rolled around, seemed to be more
3 in a routine.

4 But could you talk about your perception of
5 the command and control issues?

6 **LTC COYNE:** Yes. I think we have to realize
7 that the 53rd Troop Command does not have the staff
8 power and manpower that a division staff has, and they
9 essentially work on support missions.

10 And when you get into an environment where
11 we're actually doing more of a security type mission,
12 they are not that familiar with it.

13 But I feel they did an outstanding job and
14 their people worked awfully hard to coordinate. And,
15 again, these battalions are kind of used to the
16 division, the division personnel.

17 It was kind of a new experience and it's very
18 difficult when you get put into an environment where
19 you don't actually know the person you talk to. It
20 takes a little while to get confidence factors.

21 And as I say, I really feel that the job done

1 by the Troop Command is outstanding considering all the
2 situations that arose.

3 **MAJ MELNYK:** What input -- now that Aviation
4 Brigade has taken care of most of the liaison on the
5 ground here, what input does Troop Command continue to
6 have or have -- what influence do they have in the
7 operation now?

8 **LTC COYNE:** The Troop Command continues to
9 operate as our headquarters. I think right now, as far
10 as mission changes, they're very limited, because we're
11 into about the eighth day here and everyone has got
12 familiar with their mission and understands who to talk
13 to and how to make things happen.

14 **MAJ MELNYK:** All right, sir. If you would,
15 anything that I haven't touched on that you want to put
16 on the table, impressions of this operation, its
17 significance for you or for the New York Guard.

18 This is your portion of the -- the whole
19 interview is for you, but this is your free time.

20 **LTC COYNE:** I think, first of all, all of our
21 soldiers are contributing, contributing wholeheartedly,

1 probably taking more risks than they normally would do
2 at any other time in their lives.

3 They've all worked hard together and pulled
4 together. And I know when you get into situations when
5 you're training, there can be a lot of discussions
6 about who's doing right or wrong or things like that.

7 What it's been down here is let's not really
8 worry about who is going to fix the problem. Let's get
9 together and make it work. It's been great.

10 **MAJ MELNYK:** Thank you very much, sir.

11 THE WITNESS: You're welcome.

12 (The interview was concluded.)

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