

NATIONAL GUARD BUREAU
Historical Services Branch

Interview NGB-09

INTERVIEW OF

MAJ MIKE MCGURTY
S-3, 1st Battalion, 69th Infantry

CONDUCTED BY

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National Guard Bureau

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[MAJ McGurty reviewed this transcript in January, 2002
and submitted corrections and comments - comments
indicated by brackets and italicized typeface]

TAPE TRANSCRIPTION

1 P R O C E E D I N G S

2 **MAJ MELNYK:** This is MAJ Les Melnyk, Army
3 National Guard Historian for the National Guard Bureau,
4 and I am interviewing today MAJ Michael S. McGurty.
5 That's M-c-G-u-r-t-y.

6 He is the S-3 of the 1st Battalion, 69th
7 Infantry.

8 This interview is taking place in the 69th
9 Infantry Regimental Armory at 68 Lexington Avenue in
10 New York City, on the 17th of September 2001.

11 Sir, would you -- you have read and signed the
12 access agreement for oral history materials and
13 initialed that there is nothing that you want withheld
14 for any reason; is that correct?

15 **MAJ MCGURTY:** Yes, it is.

16 **MAJ MELNYK:** Okay. Would you -- well, let's
17 begin at the beginning here then.

18 Where were you when you found out about the
19 attack and what was your first reaction?

20 **MAJ MCGURTY:** I was at work in New Windsor,
21 New York, which is outside of Newburgh, and my boss

1 called me up and reported that a plane had hit the
2 World Trade Center.

3 **MAJ MELNYK:** What did you do, sir?

4 **MAJ MCGURTY:** Well, what I initially did is,
5 of course, turned on the radio and they had indicated
6 that it was a small airplane that had hit, and I was
7 assuming that somebody was buzzing the skyline, lost
8 control of it, and hit it.

9 And then after listening to the radio, the
10 second plane hit. I tried to get a hold of the armory,
11 but all the lines were busy, and, finally, MAJ Obregon
12 [*the battalion Executive Officer, a full-time, AGR*
13 *officer*] was able to get through to me and I
14 immediately started to make preparations, went home,
15 started packing up all my gear, and tried to get down
16 into the city.

17 **MAJ MELNYK:** And you work fairly high upstate.
18 What do you do?

19 **MAJ MCGURTY:** I'm a military curator at New
20 Windsor Cantonment. It's a Revolutionary War historic
21 site outside of Newburgh. I work for New York State.

1 **MAJ MELNYK:** That's right up my alley. I
2 didn't realize that.

3 **MAJ MCGURTY:** Yeah. Actually, it's great.
4 The major problem that anybody who is living upstate
5 faced was trying to get down into the stricken area and
6 I was wondering whether, in the future, DMNA might be
7 able to distribute placards so that we can put them on
8 our dashboards. That would expedite us getting through
9 some of the checkpoints.

10 **MAJ MELNYK:** DMNA is Division of Military and
11 Naval Affairs, which is the headquarters for all
12 National Guard troops in the State of New York.

13 We're spelling it out --

14 **MAJ MCGURTY:** Sure.

15 **MAJ MELNYK:** -- for future listeners who might
16 not be familiar with that.

17 **MAJ MCGURTY:** Right.

18 **MAJ MELNYK:** All right, sir. So you attempted
19 -- you got your gear and you're trying to get down here
20 and you hit traffic.

21 **MAJ MCGURTY:** Well, my wife had -- I knew that

1 I was probably going to experience that, because
2 considering the situation, I would have taken Metro
3 North, which is the railway. But it was not running in
4 there.

5 So I said to my wife, if you can drive me,
6 we'll see how far we can get, and I got as far as the
7 north Bronx and then I just got out of the car and just
8 started walking and walked over to Manhattan.

9 I was able to walk a ways down and I finally
10 got the train in and I took the train down to Grand
11 Central.

12 **MAJ MELNYK:** The subway? -- So you did a fair
13 amount of walking.

14 **MAJ MCGURTY:** Correct.

15 **MAJ MELNYK:** When did you show up at the
16 armory?

17 **MAJ MCGURTY:** I got here about 1530, 1600,
18 around in there.

19 **MAJ MELNYK:** What condition did you find
20 things in? You're the OPS officer. Who was here to
21 fill you in?

1 **MAJ McGURTY:** MAJ Obregon was here. The
2 [*lieutenant*] colonel was here. CPT Dunn, who was the
3 S-2, was here. And we had a quick meeting and MAJ
4 Obregon and colonel Slack [*the battalion commander*] had
5 just come back from the site and had filled us in about
6 how horrible the situation was and how badly stricken
7 the area was.

8 Up until that point, I knew it was bad, but
9 their descriptions of it were unbelievable.

10 **MAJ MELNYK:** You had been listening to a
11 radio, I assume, in the car.

12 **MAJ McGURTY:** The whole time, correct.

13 **MAJ MELNYK:** And you knew that the towers were
14 down.

15 **MAJ McGURTY:** Exactly.

16 **MAJ MELNYK:** You knew that the Pentagon had
17 been hit.

18 **MAJ McGURTY:** Correct. And I had heard that
19 the other -- the other plane, and I was assuming that
20 if something didn't happen, they were probably going to
21 shoot it down.

1 **MAJ MELNYK:** Yeah.

2 **MAJ MCGURTY:** And we found later that that was
3 -- you know, just everything was -- you know, who
4 knows, because they were reporting that there were four
5 other planes missing.

6 So we really didn't know what type of
7 situation we were going to be going into.

8 **MAJ MELNYK:** At that initial briefing, had you
9 been called for state active duty? Did you know what
10 -- what was your status?

11 **MAJ MCGURTY:** I wasn't aware of the call up.
12 Everybody on the alert roster had been activated. I
13 wasn't aware of whether we were on state active duty or
14 not. I knew that we needed to get the help there.

15 **MAJ MELNYK:** So it was just on your own
16 initiative. The soldiers, also, on their own
17 initiative were showing up --

18 **MAJ MCGURTY:** MAJ Obregon finally got through
19 to me and I said "I need your help, get down here," and
20 so we just initiated it and then I believe the actual
21 documents and the actual (*orders*) followed later, but

1 everybody just kept pouring in, because they knew that

2 --

3 **MAJ MELNYK:** But you don't know at what time
4 it actually became official that you were mobilized.

5 **MAJ MCGURTY:** No, I don't. It took a while,
6 because there was some uncertainty whether we were
7 federalized or whether -- it was -- no one knew our
8 status, but we knew that we had a job to do.

9 **MAJ MELNYK:** Right. And what role did you
10 take early on? Where were you positioned? What were
11 you instructed by the battalion commander? How did it
12 shape up early on?

13 **MAJ MCGURTY:** It was immediately to get some
14 overlays of the area, start looking at the operational
15 area, and trying to put together some command and
16 control graphics, because we were going to be sharing
17 the area with the 101st CAV, and just trying to come up
18 with a plan that would cordon off that area and then be
19 ready to respond to any of the needs of the civil
20 authorities.

21 **MAJ MELNYK:** And you made the assumption that

1 you would be used for cordoning off or --

2 **MAJ MCGURTY:** Correct. And we also prepared
3 our soldiers that potentially you might be called in to
4 assist in possibly looking for survivors and we really
5 tried to think of every possible contingency that we
6 would be involved with, but we -- based on the
7 situation, how many people were down there, we assumed
8 that that was going to be our major mission, was to try
9 and seal that area off, to make sure that no one got
10 hurt and that people were evacuated out of the area to
11 protect the people who were left.

12 **MAJ MELNYK:** When was the last time, to your
13 knowledge, the battalion had any kind of civil
14 disturbance training or preparation for this kind of
15 mission? Not an infantry mission, but crowd control.

16 **MAJ MCGURTY:** Generally, every year. In fact,
17 it's ironic that we usually do it the last IDT
18 (*Inactive Duty Training*) of the -- the last MUTA
19 (*Multiple Unit Training Assembly*) of the training year
20 (*i.e., September*), and we were scheduled to do civil
21 disturbance training --

1 **MAJ MELNYK:** This weekend.

2 **MAJ MCGURTY:** -- this past weekend.

3 **MAJ MELNYK:** This weekend that just ended.

4 **MAJ MCGURTY:** So it would have been the
5 September prior. So I think we would say that we
6 trained in the tasks.

7 **MAJ MELNYK:** How long had you been the S-3 of
8 the 1st Battalion, 69th Infantry?

9 **MAJ MCGURTY:** I came on board in January.
10 Officially it's March, but I came on board during the
11 brigade WarFighter in January. I've been drilling
12 here, but the official paperwork did not come through
13 until March.

14 **MAJ MELNYK:** So as the S-3, you had gone
15 through a WarFighter exercise.

16 **MAJ MCGURTY:** Correct.

17 **MAJ MELNYK:** And been out to Fort Leavenworth.

18 **MAJ MCGURTY:** Well, this was at Fort Dix, the
19 brigade exercise.

20 **MAJ MELNYK:** Thank you - But you had not done
21 civil disturbance training ...

1 **MAJ MCGURTY:** Correct.

2 **MAJ MELNYK:** Okay. Where -- at what point did
3 you begin moving troops downtown and did you go forward
4 with the troops or did you stay back? What was your
5 role in that?

6 **MAJ MCGURTY:** Okay. What we basically did was
7 the first thing we had to do was do the recon and
8 establish where we wanted to put out our CPs (*Command*
9 *Posts*), and we chose Battery Park because most of the
10 push of people was going to be coming down from the
11 north.

12 So we would have wanted to have all of our
13 command and control and also our operating base away
14 from where that major push of people was going to be.

15 So we had come down and did a recon and then
16 - to be totally honest with you, everything was such a
17 blur, I forget exactly when we moved the troops down,
18 to be honest with you.

19 I know we were down there pretty -- I know
20 Wednesday we were hot and heavy moving into it. So it
21 had to have been Tuesday night. (*Actually early*

1 *Wednesday morning)*

2 **MAJ MELNYK:** What was your command situation
3 like? It sounds like you basically were operating in a
4 vacuum. What kind of instructions were coming from
5 higher, if any?

6 **MAJ MCGURTY:** It was somewhat difficult,
7 because when we got on ground, we were looking for the
8 basic operations order and we had not gotten that, nor
9 had we gotten some of the most important things as we
10 were deploying troops out in the field, which is the
11 rules of engagement.

12 And one of the major problems we had is in
13 some cases, when we deployed into our various cordon
14 locations, you had fairly high ranking police officials
15 saying "Oh, Okay, the military has control of it, we
16 can push back," and just trying to instill into them
17 that we operate under your direction.

18 It caused a lot of difficulty in that regard
19 because certain of the lower police officials, the
20 patrolmen, as soon as we showed up, figured that we
21 would be calling the shots and telling them what to do

1 instead of the other way around.

2 And I had numerous times around the circuit
3 trying to explain to the officers the relationship of
4 how we're here to assist you in restoring control to
5 the city.

6 **MAJ MELNYK:** Were your officers in the Guard,
7 the 69th, clear that they were -- was it clear to them
8 that they were subordinate to civil authority?

9 **MAJ MCGURTY:** Yes. Yes, it was.

10 **MAJ MELNYK:** But you're saying the PD, the
11 police department --

12 **MAJ MCGURTY:** Correct.

13 **MAJ MELNYK:** -- assumed martial law or
14 something to that effect.

15 **MAJ MCGURTY:** Correct. Exactly.

16 **MAJ MELNYK:** All right.

17 **MAJ MCGURTY:** That was in many cases. I
18 wouldn't say that every police official that I ran
19 across, but in many cases, I got a police captain come
20 up to me and go, "Well, you guys are in charge." And
21 I'd go, "No, Officer, you guys are. We're here to

1 assist you."

2 **MAJ MELNYK:** Was there any kind of SOP to
3 operate off of for dealing with civil authorities in a
4 situation like this?

5 **MAJ MCGURTY:** Nothing was enacted, and that is
6 something that we need to, from the highest level on
7 down, try and work on that, because it's been a while
8 since -- of course, there's a major difference between
9 a snow storm or things of that nature versus -- this is
10 something, of course, none of us had ever --

11 **MAJ MELNYK:** What many people assume, what the
12 President is calling an act of war.

13 **MAJ MCGURTY:** Correct.

14 **MAJ MELNYK:** They assume military control.

15 **MAJ MCGURTY:** Yes.

16 **MAJ MELNYK:** And that changes things, right.

17 **MAJ MCGURTY:** Can I just address to that?

18 **MAJ MELNYK:** Please.

19 **MAJ MCGURTY:** Also, when we're talking about
20 threat, of course, the threat was very unclear. The
21 101 CAV showed up with full M249s, 113s, with their

1 weapons --

2 MAJ MELNYK: The M249 is a --

3 MAJ MCGURTY: Is a --

4 MAJ MELNYK: Automatic grenade launcher.

5 MAJ MCGURTY: Automatic grenade launcher,

6 correct. (*Incorrect information - the M249 is the Squad*
7 *Automatic Weapon, a light machine gun; the Mk19 is the*
8 *Automatic Grenade launcher*)

9 MAJ MELNYK: And the 203 is - (*a single-shot*
10 *grenade launcher mounted under the barrel of an M-16*
11 *rifle*)

12 MAJ MCGURTY: Right. Excuse me.

13 MAJ MELNYK: Just because it might be 20 years
14 from now when you listen to this again.

15 MAJ MCGURTY: Sure. So they showed up with
16 the -60s mounted and the .50s mounted on the -113s --
17 .50 caliber machine guns.

18 MAJ MELNYK: So they brought in their armored
19 personnel carriers.

20 MAJ MCGURTY: Yes.

21 MAJ MELNYK: How did they bring them over?

1 **MAJ MCGURTY:** A limited number. They brought
2 them right over on Staten -- I believe on the Staten
3 Island Ferry.

4 **MAJ MELNYK:** On the Staten Island Ferry.

5 **MAJ MCGURTY:** Correct. And they brought in a
6 large number of vehicles. [*Incorrect - the 101 Cavalry*
7 *drove its vehicles into Manhattan via the Battery*
8 *tunnel on the morning of Sept. 12. Subsequently,*
9 *troops traveled back and forth to Staten Island on the*
10 *ferry]*

11 But we had decided, because the situation
12 appeared to have been somewhat stabilized, we brought
13 our weapons in the back of trucks and the officers were
14 all armed with nine millimeters.

15 **MAJ MELNYK:** And the soldiers?

16 **MAJ MCGURTY:** Were -- I had flak jackets on,
17 had their helmets and had their LBE, but the weapons
18 were close by. So in case they needed to be armed, we
19 could move them out there.

20 But the police officials from the very
21 beginning said that that's too much of a display of

1 force for the 101. But considering the THREATCON, that
2 was totally within keeping with the threat.

3 **MAJ MELNYK:** So the 101 kept their APCs
4 (*Armored Personnel Carriers*) away. They didn't put
5 them out on the lines.

6 **MAJ MCGURTY:** Well, initially, they did and
7 one was placed right by city hall, which certainly city
8 hall kind of -- so eventually what happened with city
9 hall, that was a no military view zone, for obvious
10 political reasons.

11 **MAJ MELNYK:** Okay.

12 **MAJ MCGURTY:** So every -- so all those type of
13 vehicles and all the other stuff, they were all hidden
14 back over there and all the other weapons systems were
15 all dismantled.

16 **MAJ MELNYK:** Other than the nine millimeter
17 pistols given to officers, were weapons at any point
18 issued to troops?

19 **MAJ MCGURTY:** No, they weren't.

20 **MAJ MELNYK:** They stayed on the trucks.

21 **MAJ MCGURTY:** Correct. In a couple cases,

1 riot batons were issued just down by where the Bowling
2 Green Train Station was, just for a few of the
3 soldiers, and immediately it was decided that it wasn't
4 necessary and they were then placed away.

5 **MAJ MELNYK:** Was ammo issued to the officers?

6 **MAJ MCGURTY:** The -- I -- yeah. All the
7 officers had one magazine.

8 **MAJ MELNYK:** One magazine.

9 **MAJ MCGURTY:** Right.

10 **MAJ MELNYK:** So you had to deal with that
11 issue, as well.

12 **MAJ MCGURTY:** Correct.

13 **MAJ MELNYK:** You said you didn't have any rules
14 of engagement. It sounds like the police did step in
15 and say -- and make suggestions about levels of force
16 or levels of how you presented yourself.

17 **MAJ MCGURTY:** Believe it --

18 **MAJ MELNYK:** What became established?

19 **MAJ MCGURTY:** Believe it or not, we talked to
20 our soldiers and our soldiers used common sense and we
21 told them specifically if there's any incidences, you

1 stop the individual, detain them and turn them over to
2 law enforcement officials.

3 So our soldiers, considering there was no ROE,
4 performed marvelous. I can't commend them enough for
5 restraint in the face of, some cases, quite serious
6 provocation, and conducted themselves in the most
7 professional manner.

8 **MAJ MELNYK:** That's good. Liaison then with
9 the police, you had to establish that the police were
10 in charge on the cordon line. What level of liaison
11 did you at battalion headquarters have with the police?

12 Was it consistent liaison? Was it ad hoc?

13 **MAJ MCGURTY:** Right. We had an awesome
14 officer from division called MAJ Bob Magnanini. He is
15 a super officer of the G-2 shop and he did all the
16 coordination with the police officials and it really,
17 really worked out well.

18 We established a great rapport all on down the
19 line with all the different officials, and credit him
20 with really keeping us in the loop and he did a great
21 job.

1 **MAJ MELNYK:** And for the soldiers out on the
2 line, who did they coordinate with? Did they have
3 officers assigned to assist in their sector or, you
4 said, they handed over anybody to the officers?

5 **MAJ MCGURTY:** Right. Generally, what you had
6 is, where all of our out posts, they mirrored, you had
7 police at posts there and our guys were, many cases,
8 directing all of the traffic, controlling the flow of
9 everything, with the officers off to the side ready to
10 assist, but they left it up to our guys, because they
11 were doing such a good job of controlling, because, of
12 course, you got a lot of emergency workers coming
13 through and they were smart enough to prioritize which
14 one needs to go through and really so the police were
15 able to step back.

16 And they saw how efficiently our chain of
17 command worked and how smooth. That gave us a lot of
18 power to do our jobs, which is quite gratifying.

19 **MAJ MELNYK:** What about the -- the chain of
20 command was clearly defined up through battalion.

21 **MAJ MCGURTY:** Correct.

1 **MAJ MELNYK:** You talk about MAJ Magnanini, who
2 came down from division, though division was not
3 directly involved. He is a divisional officer who
4 appeared on the scene.

5 **MAJ MCGURTY:** Correct. He lives in New
6 Jersey. So he showed up right to the armory. He's an
7 old 1st of the 69th Infantry officer.

8 **MAJ MELNYK:** Right. Hope to interview him
9 later.

10 What was your military chain of command?

11 **MAJ MCGURTY:** The military chain of command
12 initially went from our battalion to Headquarters,
13 Troop Command, which operates out of Valhalla. They
14 had a forward at the Park Avenue Armory, but there was
15 no perceptible TAC (*Tactical Command Post*) that we
16 could see that we would be readily identified as --
17 that we would operate as a tactical command with.

18 So it became very blurred as far as a command
19 and control and finally, [brigadier] general Klein came
20 by, who is the commander of Troop Command, and said to
21 my battalion commander he has total confidence in his

1 abilities and that he will support him in everything
2 that he does.

3 **MAJ MELNYK:** So Troop Command sort of adopted
4 a hands off approach and allowed LTC Slack -- LTC
5 Slack, though, had to work in conjunction with the 101
6 CAV.

7 What other units were on the ground?

8 **MAJ MCGURTY:** Oh, we had a great working
9 relationship with the 101 CAV and the 258 Field
10 Artillery. They're all part of our brigade, 3rd
11 Brigade, 42nd Division.

12 So we're old hat at working together.

13 **MAJ MELNYK:** Who coordinated? Was there any
14 higher level on the ground that coordinated actions?
15 At what point was a higher level of command
16 established?

17 **MAJ MCGURTY:** Eventually, on Saturday, which
18 is on the 15th, the Aviation Brigade stood up, which
19 the 42nd Division Aviation Brigade stood up as what we
20 would call our TAC (*Tactical Command Post*), and they
21 became the maneuver controlling headquarters and that

1 brought -- it was a clearly defined chain that went
2 right to them and then the Aviation Brigade dealt with
3 the other layers above that.

4 And it fell into what we're used to working
5 with. But with the 101 CAV and the 258, just a lot of
6 lateral communications between the -3's and the -2's
7 (*i.e., the S-3s and S-2's, battalion level Operations*
8 *and Intelligence officers*), and we also have to
9 remember that you have Bravo, Charlie of the 105th
10 (*Infantry*), in there with us at that time, doing a
11 great job.

12 And it got kind of problematical because
13 initially they were -- Bravo 105 was part of our task,
14 because they're in this armory. Then they were joined
15 by Charlie and then they were chopped to another org,
16 and I think it was the 258, but I'm not sure.

17 And then eventually, because all the infantry
18 guys really can take care of other infantry guys, they
19 eventually chopped them back to us, and they were doing
20 a super job.

21 **MAJ MELNYK:** Those two companies were sort of

1 orphans because the rest of their battalion and
2 battalion command structure wasn't available.

3 **MAJ MCGURTY:** Well, eventually MAJ Markey, who
4 is a battalion XO, and - I forget his name - the
5 battalion S-3 came down for that control, but the
6 problem was not being aligned, because they were inside
7 the 1-69th's perimeter.

8 So for a while, it was kind of like we've got
9 a unit that is not really under anybody's control
10 inside our sector.

11 **MAJ MELNYK:** Describe the mission, the initial
12 mission of the 1-69 when it arrived. You said you had
13 the 105th inside your perimeter.

14 **MAJ MCGURTY:** Correct.

15 **MAJ MELNYK:** My understanding, from talking to
16 people previously, they were the closest in group to
17 ground zero, the pile, whatever you want to refer to
18 it.

19 **MAJ MCGURTY:** Right.

20 **MAJ MELNYK:** You had tactical control over
21 them for part of the time. What was the 105th doing?

1 **MAJ MCGURTY:** The 105th, the main mission that
2 we had was right by the World Trade Center towers. You
3 had a lot of people who really were anxious to get in
4 there and help and you have to admire their patriotism,
5 but that's no job for amateurs and you really had --
6 emotions ran high in some cases, to where you had
7 people who had family, friend, relatives, and wanted to
8 get in there.

9 And with all the iron being moved around, it
10 was really a place for professionals, and they (*the*
11 *soldiers of B and C Companies, 105th Infantry*) blocked
12 the east side of the World Trade Center to keep anybody
13 from getting close to where they're moving all the big
14 iron and potentially you had parts of other buildings
15 falling down.

16 So just to protect and just have essential
17 personnel in there who were doing the job and you could
18 have superfluous people who were getting in the way and
19 potentially could get hurt.

20 **MAJ MELNYK:** Some of the soldiers had said
21 that there was also an issue of even rescue workers who

1 wanted to get in on the action, not just family and
2 others, but professionals who were trying to push in.
3 Did you find that the case?

4 **MAJ MCGURTY:** Correct. It was certainly the
5 case and you can understand that these rescue workers,
6 that is what they are trained to do, and it breaks your
7 heart to think that there's people in there that,
8 unless you can get to them quick enough, they're going
9 to die.

10 So emotions were really, really high.

11 **MAJ MELNYK:** Who controlled who came and went
12 from the World Trade Center site?

13 **MAJ MCGURTY:** There was a fire chief, and I
14 forget his name, on the eastern side and he gave the
15 105th and eventually we had to swing down the 101 into
16 the -- the 105th was on Day Street. I'm not that
17 familiar with the World Trade Center, but there was a
18 globe and there's steps that go up there. Well, there
19 was a globe.

20 They were right there on that street and there
21 was a crane just to the south, but then you had Liberty

1 Plaza, where -- not talking the actual building, but
2 there was an entryway and that was where the 101 was
3 eventually swung into place, because you had people
4 really trying to get in there, rescue workers, and the
5 fire chief and a lot of people got really upset by it.

6 But they just couldn't have anybody else in
7 there.

8 **MAJ MELNYK:** So the majority of the line
9 companies of the 69th - as opposed to the 105th and 101
10 were in a cordon established further outside.

11 **MAJ MCGURTY:** Correct.

12 **MAJ MELNYK:** Describe that and what they did.

13 **MAJ MCGURTY:** Right. What we did is we looked
14 at the areas that needed to be blocked off, coordinated
15 with the 101, and we decided that Broadway was a
16 logical place to divide the cordon.

17 The 101, because they're an armor unit, they
18 don't have as many people. I gave them the smaller
19 sector, which was in the east, and we agreed on that,
20 and it basically ran from just a little bit south of
21 City Hall along Nassau through a few small side

1 streets, over to where Bowling Green is over to where
2 we are.

3 Ours ran from beginning in the south, up the
4 West Side Highway, over to Thames (*Street*), through
5 Battery Park, and swung up around along the water till
6 you got up to Chambers Street, and then swung all the
7 way across Chambers Street, almost to city hall.

8 Blocking Broadway was one of the biggies. And
9 we also had set up like a covering force area. We had
10 our main line of defense at Chambers, but then we set
11 up a covering force up at -- a couple blocks. Actually
12 had a few guys there and a few guys there to try and --
13 they'll take as many out, if people slip by, they did
14 that, and then the main line of resistance.

15 **MAJ MELNYK:** So the military training comes in
16 handy.

17 **MAJ MCGURTY:** It certainly does, 'cause you
18 can see that you want to defend something as far out as
19 humanly possible.

20 **MAJ MELNYK:** And the Mayor had declared the
21 area below Canal Street to be largely off limits.

1 **MAJ MCGURTY:** Correct.

2 **MAJ MELNYK:** So they were supposed to be away
3 from there.

4 You have already begun your after action
5 review and one of the processes you looked at was the
6 various missions assigned to the 69th while you were
7 there.

8 If you want to review that with me. I mean,
9 we already talked about the cordon mission.

10 **MAJ MCGURTY:** Right.

11 **MAJ MELNYK:** What else was the unit assigned
12 to do, and if you can put that into a time frame, as
13 well. When you initially got there, it was the
14 cordoning job.

15 **MAJ MCGURTY:** Right.

16 **MAJ MELNYK:** What other jobs were done in the
17 early phase?

18 **MAJ MCGURTY:** After doing the cordon mission,
19 the police were anxious to get some of our personnel to
20 try and do a roof top search to make sure that there
21 aren't any remains or to make sure that there isn't

1 airplane parts up on the top of the roof.

2 And we had a contingent of our scouts, a
3 composite platoon of HHC personnel, and also our
4 physician, Dr. Thomasina, and one of our medics, medic
5 Ng, going up there and helping in that regard.

6 And we went in two man teams, we went up with
7 two police officers, and we were just a pair of eyes to
8 identify any remains and then the police took care of
9 that.

10 We had potentially, with a lot of the
11 buildings, they were going to let people in. So we
12 were involved with going through the buildings and
13 making sure that they are safe and that there isn't any
14 unpleasant surprises waiting for the people when they
15 come through.

16 **MAJ MELNYK:** Meaning body parts.

17 **MAJ MCGURTY:** Exactly, and other type of --

18 **MAJ MELNYK:** How were they involved in
19 determining safety or not? Were they looking for
20 obvious structural damage?

21 **MAJ MCGURTY:** Correct. They were --

1 **MAJ MELNYK:** They're not trained engineers.

2 **MAJ MCGURTY:** Correct. They would go through
3 with police officers and basically what all of --
4 hovering around the entire site were large numbers of
5 structural engineers, and I don't know what equipment
6 they were using. They looked like little - I can't
7 even describe them - like little binoculars, but that
8 they were looking through like sights and they were
9 looking at the alignment of the buildings to make sure
10 that they hadn't shifted one way or the other.

11 And they had gone through --

12 **MAJ MELNYK:** Using surveyor's instruments.

13 **MAJ MCGURTY:** Right, yes.

14 **MAJ MELNYK:** Sounds like when you survey a --

15 **MAJ MCGURTY:** Right. And they had gone
16 through to every single building and had made a
17 determination whether there was danger of collapse.

18 With Liberty Plaza, it just kept going back
19 and forth, but the facade is very precarious. But the
20 rest of the buildings were cleared by the structural
21 (*engineers*) -- that they're not going to collapse.

1 So it was just making sure that there wasn't
2 anybody, potentially looting that could hurt the people
3 and went through there and brought the -- once we had
4 determined that they were safe to go through, then hand
5 in hand with that went the escort missions, and we
6 probably had, with the escort missions, from the higher
7 authority, you had Governor Pataki and Mayor Giuliani
8 declaring that everything east of Broadway on Saturday
9 was clear, and it wasn't, because you had all kinds of
10 potential debris falling off Gateway Plaza. So you had
11 all this crush of people who were down coming in from
12 the south who had been staying up in -- either staying
13 over in Staten Island or coming down from the north.

14 And we had a hard time trying to convince the
15 people and just keeping them back, that you can't go in
16 there, it's still not clear yet. But the Mayor said it
17 was fine and -- but the soldiers did a lot of bringing
18 people up, secure what belongings you could, or secure
19 your pet, and then get out of there.

20 And even that shifted, because for a while
21 there was a transformer fire, which had the PCBs going

1 and everything, so that we had to push everything back,
2 and people were getting more and more upset.

3 But generally, they were very well behaved.
4 We gave them water and food and tried to keep them
5 happy as much as possible.

6 **MAJ MELNYK:** Were there other communication
7 problems with the Mayor's office, with the NYPD, lack
8 of unity in the message?

9 **MAJ MCGURTY:** Yeah. Generally, I can't say
10 enough good things of all the police and firemen that
11 we worked with, but a lot of times information just
12 wasn't -- certainly, the top didn't know a 100 percent
13 what was going on the ground and whether political --
14 I know they were pushing really hard to get the city
15 opened, but the guys on the ground are saying "no", and
16 then all these people, and certainly that needs to be
17 addressed later.

18 **MAJ MELNYK:** Other missions?

19 **MAJ MCGURTY:** We did apprehend a few looters,
20 people dressed -- one individual -- this needs to be
21 verified, if I remember it right, had picked up -- a

1 fireman had taken off his equipment, the boots and
2 stuff, and he just put it on and was caught walking out
3 of the building with some items.

4 One of the -- in our cordon line, we had
5 caught some individual dressed up as an ATF agent, the
6 white over-suit, with boots and a hat, and he was
7 discovered to have a camera on him and he was turned
8 over to law enforcement authorities and arrested by our
9 soldiers.

10 Our guys did a super job of checking IDs and
11 making sure that nobody got through who wasn't
12 authorized to be in there.

13 **MAJ MELNYK:** I'm going to use this opportunity
14 to flip the tape.

15 **MAJ MCGURTY:** Sure.

16 (Tape change.)

17 **MAJ MELNYK:** This is a continuation of the
18 interview with MAJ Michael McGurty, the S-3, 1st
19 Battalion, 69th Infantry, about the events following
20 the attack on the World Trade Center.

21 Please, sir.

1 **MAJ MCGURTY:** Okay. One of the things that we
2 had to do, which we appreciated their help, but we had
3 to escort military personnel who really weren't
4 assigned a mission, because there were many military
5 personnel who had gotten into the sector and we asked
6 them what they're doing, who they're assigned to, and
7 they couldn't tell you. They just want to help.

8 And after a while, the large number of them
9 just became a -- just jammed up everything and got in
10 everybody's way.

11 A Naval officer had set himself up,
12 unauthorized, as a separate EOC somewhere.

13 **MAJ MELNYK:** Emergency Operations Center.

14 **MAJ MCGURTY:** Yeah. Correct. And finally he
15 had to be told by a very high authority that he was out
16 of business, because we got the call initially that
17 we're reporting to him, and under whose authority that
18 he established this thing?

19 So he had cobbled together anybody in uniform
20 who he could get and established an EOC.

21 **MAJ MELNYK:** A bit too much initiative.

1 **MAJ MCGURTY:** Correct. One of the more
2 terrible missions was the coroner had set up a
3 temporary morgue in Liberty -- I believe it was Liberty
4 Plaza. It was somewhere over there.

5 And with the building in danger, they had to
6 move the bodies over to Burger King and they ended up
7 he was looking at one of the bags with the remains and
8 he saw flashes of photographs as reporters tried to --
9 so we had to rush some of our soldiers over there to
10 augment the police as guards at the morgue. One of the
11 more terrible tasks that we had to do during this time.

12 But that basically, I think, summarizes the
13 basic run of missions. There probably were a few more
14 that I have forgotten, but escorting people to the
15 various structures, making sure they were safe, going
16 there, going back, checking for looters, apprehending,
17 detaining looters and turning them over to the police.

18 **MAJ MELNYK:** The cordon then -- the units are
19 first on the ground beginning what time? Is it Tuesday
20 night, Wednesday morning? Do you have a rough --

21 **MAJ MCGURTY:** I believe it was -- I believe we

1 were in place on Wednesday morning.

2 **MAJ MELNYK:** And they were daytime.

3 **MAJ MCGURTY:** Correct.

4 **MAJ MELNYK:** Were they relieved at night?

5 **MAJ MCGURTY:** We were there, our official
6 times were from 0800 to 2000. And there are some
7 variations on transportation, because you can imagine
8 trying to get buses, because the city provided us with
9 buses. We're trying to get them through the traffic.

10 **MAJ MELNYK:** So the troops bused out at 2000
11 and came back here to the armory.

12 **MAJ MCGURTY:** Correct.

13 **MAJ MELNYK:** And what was the situation like
14 here at the armory?

15 **MAJ MCGURTY:** Well, after a while, it got to
16 be incredibly depressing, because it became the -- I'm
17 not sure what the official title, but the bereavement
18 center where people would come in and report the loved
19 ones that are missing and have the opportunity to give
20 DNA to try and identify some of the remains, and it's
21 just plastered with all of the pictures of all of the

1 people who were missing.

2 **MAJ MELNYK:** What effect did having the armory
3 taken over by the city, the city set up, have on your
4 ability to operate?

5 **MAJ MCGURTY:** We --

6 **MAJ MELNYK:** How do you overcome that or was
7 it a major impediment? What was the effect?

8 **MAJ MCGURTY:** We adjusted. We just opened up
9 some of the rooms that we normally don't use and we
10 just had to work around -- we totally understand what
11 had to happen.

12 But it kind of threw us off a little bit in
13 the beginning, but we adjusted and drove on.

14 **MAJ MELNYK:** So soldiers would get back to the
15 armory about --

16 **MAJ MCGURTY:** It varied. Sometimes it was as
17 late as 2330, some cases it was about 2100, it varied
18 from night to night.

19 **MAJ MELNYK:** You had to find space for the
20 companies that were from outlying areas --

21 **MAJ MCGURTY:** Right. In some cases, they were

1 laying in the halls up on the second floor, because
2 they had closed off -- they took all of the rooms on
3 the first floor, except the commander's office, and a
4 couple of offices off the drill shed floor.

5 **MAJ MELNYK:** So beginning Thursday morning,
6 what was the routine like?

7 **MAJ MCGURTY:** We were really -- about Thursday
8 morning, Friday morning, it was generally we were
9 getting up at about 5:30. We were doing personal
10 hygiene, having chow, and the buses would arrive around
11 07, and we got everybody loaded up on 07 and we would
12 be at the site about 7:30, which gave us plenty of time
13 to make sure that we did the shift change with the 258,
14 and the 258 was eventually augmented with the 642
15 Aviation.

16 I forget which day they were augmented by.

17 **MAJ MELNYK:** The 642 Aviation Support
18 Battalion, right?

19 **MAJ MCGURTY:** Correct.

20 **MAJ MELNYK:** Out of --

21 **MAJ MCGURTY:** DASB [*Division Aviation Support*

1 *Battalion]*

2 **MAJ MELNYK:** -- Aviation Brigade.

3 **MAJ MCGURTY:** Right.

4 **MAJ MELNYK:** What -- how did -- and I realize
5 this is more of an S-2 focused question, but how was
6 the evaluation of the threat initially? How did you
7 determine it was?

8 I assume you didn't have a data dump from
9 Intel on time.

10 **MAJ MCGURTY:** Correct. There was nothing
11 pushed down from higher. So our major source of
12 information was coordinating with the police and also
13 just listening to the radio.

14 **MAJ MELNYK:** Okay.

15 **MAJ MCGURTY:** So we had the radio constantly
16 on and we were constantly coordinating with the police
17 and we had police officers right at our CP and every
18 little change to any of the buildings, were reported
19 immediately, from the guys down there. So that was our
20 main source of intelligence.

21 **MAJ MELNYK:** Was there any worry that there

1 would be another attack?

2 **MAJ MCGURTY:** After we got into late Wednesday
3 afternoon, we had pretty much -- we were alert. We had
4 a quick reaction force initially on Wednesday composed
5 of the scouts and some other elements from HHC.

6 But as we see the threat, we didn't lower our
7 guard, but we concentrated more soldiers on meeting the
8 other tasks that the police department wanted us to do,
9 the roof top search and the escorting people into
10 buildings.

11 **MAJ MELNYK:** Other than -- it sounds like your
12 liaison with the civilian elements was done primarily
13 by MAJ Magnanini.

14 **MAJ MCGURTY:** Correct. The higher -- the
15 higher elements.

16 **MAJ MELNYK:** The higher elements. And then at
17 the line unit level, it was (*police*)officer to soldier.

18 **MAJ MCGURTY:** And we had a police command post
19 eventually set up right in front of the Customs House,
20 and it was a captain and deputy inspector in there. So
21 we were getting intelligence right from there, more

1 real time stuff, higher up stuff.

2 **MAJ MELNYK:** Yeah. I get -- I'm trying to
3 gather a sense of -- there was no SOP and really no
4 established chain of command, civilian chain of
5 command, no regular liaisons.

6 It was all something you fell into informally
7 that worked as well.

8 **MAJ MCGURTY:** Correct. Right.

9 **MAJ MELNYK:** Okay. Is there anything you want
10 to add about what you saw, the people you worked with?

11 **MAJ MCGURTY:** I just would like to sum it up
12 that everybody who went to the site from -- whether you
13 were well intentioned and were asked to leave, really
14 gave it their all and really the firemen, the police,
15 really the firemen and the police working on the pile,
16 I can't say enough to them, and my soldiers, they
17 performed an incredibly difficult mission, something
18 that they weren't necessarily trained for, this type of
19 operation.

20 But we tried to look at it as the situation
21 that we were doing MOUT (*Military Operations in Urban*

1 *Terrain*) training, securing rear areas. We did kind of
2 dovetail it into some of the infantry operations that
3 we do.

4 But to put on a public face to it, where
5 you're dealing with - - trying not to offend civilians
6 who are anxious and desperate to try and see what their
7 property looked like or whether loved ones were there.

8 Can't say enough good things about the
9 soldiers in the 69th and how they accomplished the
10 mission. The relief workers, the firemen, the police
11 department, all the other agencies did a super job.

12 **MAJ MELNYK:** I want to pick this up with --
13 you're formulating your AAR and lessons learned, your
14 After Action Review.

15 What are the primary lessons right now, after
16 the action is completed, that you would want to
17 address, either with your military chain of command or
18 the civilian chain of command in the incident?

19 **MAJ MCGURTY:** Overall, for any type of
20 exercise, no one could have foreseen the magnitude of
21 this, but a joint command consisting of military

1 officials, police, firemen, and other federal agencies
2 would have greatly simplified operations.

3 You had separate headquarters established all
4 around and you had liaisons at that, but it's no
5 substitute for having a joint command post, where
6 information could be pushed up and pushed down and
7 there was a clearly defined path of where information
8 flows.

9 And I think that is the single most important
10 thing, and all the misunderstandings would have been
11 solved by this joint command, with a very strict chain
12 of command.

13 **MAJ MELNYK:** It should have been civilian led
14 in this incident?

15 **MAJ MCGURTY:** Correct. This would have been
16 civilian led and we would have fallen under --

17 **MAJ MELNYK:** So either the city or the state
18 failed to provide that. Is that active now? Is there
19 a clear command post now?

20 **MAJ MCGURTY:** No. As we left the field on
21 Sunday 16 September, there still was no joint command

1 exercising overall control over all of the agencies
2 that were operating.

3 **MAJ MELNYK:** Any other lessons you want to
4 bring out about training for civil disaster?

5 **MAJ MCGURTY:** Training for future is -- we
6 need to establish contingencies for some of the various
7 operations that we would need to undertake and have
8 generic ROEs, which could be tailored for the mission,
9 so that we could hit the ground running with at least a
10 basic ROE.

11 So it gives the soldiers the parameters under
12 which they operate, because sometimes common sense is
13 not a -- that everyone is going to practice the same
14 way.

15 And if you had a basic ROE, you at least would
16 give the soldiers the parameters of what they can do,
17 but most importantly, for this instance, what they
18 should not do.

19 And though we were called in to work on the
20 pile, considering our lack of training in that,
21 removing debris and helping with the recovery

1 operations, that's something probably that our soldiers
2 should not have done because we simply did not have the
3 training for it.

4 **MAJ MELNYK:** Anything you want to add?

5 **MAJ MCGURTY:** There's nothing -- I certainly
6 want to compile my after action review and try and
7 collect my thoughts and put everything together in a
8 coherent manner.

9 I've taken some good notes and I'm going to
10 take out as many notes as possible from all the other
11 participants and try and come up with a clear vision of
12 what we all did out there.

13 **MAJ MELNYK:** Your overall impression of the
14 battalion, just to finish it off with.

15 **MAJ MCGURTY:** Again, I just can't say enough
16 good things about the command, from LTC Slack to MAJ
17 Obregon, to all my fellow staff officers, to the
18 soldiers, leaders, did a super job in a tough mission,
19 where emotions were so high.

20 Some of our soldiers had lost family and
21 friends at the Trade Center and for them to have just

1 driven on and gone on and done good things, I am
2 incredibly proud of this battalion.

3 **MAJ MELNYK:** Thank you, MAJ McGurty.
4 Appreciate it. Thanks a lot.

5 (The interview was concluded.)

6 * * * * *