

UNITED STATES ARMY  
CENTER OF MILITARY HISTORY

INTERVIEW OF

CPL ALEJANDRO BASTARDO  
Fire Team Leader, Company A, 1/69 IN

126-ORH-I-010

**NEIT-126-010**

CONDUCTED BY

SGT PATRICK JENNINGS

The Center of Military History

AT

The Pentagon

September 29, 2001

TAPE TRANSCRIPTION

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

2 **SGT JENNINGS:** This is SGT Patrick Jennings of the  
3 126th Military History Detachment conducting an oral  
4 history interview on 29 September 2001. The time is  
5 1326.

6 Can you tell me your name and spell it, please?

7 **CPL BASTARDO:** My name is CPL Bastardo. That is  
8 B-a-s-t-a-r-d-o.

9 **SGT JENNINGS:** And your first name?

10 **CPL BASTARDO:** First name is Alejandro. That is  
11 A-l-e-j-a-n-d-r-o.

12 **SGT JENNINGS:** Can you tell me your duty  
13 assignment?

14 **CPL BASTARDO:** I am a fire team leader in Alpha  
15 Company, 1/69 mechanized. Because of the shortage of  
16 personnel, sometimes I do squad leader, platoon  
17 sergeant, you know.

18 **SGT JENNINGS:** I understand. And what is your  
19 civilian occupation?

20 **CPL BASTARDO:** I am a middle school teacher.

21 **SGT JENNINGS:** What subject?

1           **CPL BASTARDO:** I teach literature and Spanish.

2           **SGT JENNINGS:** Excellent. What were you doing  
3 when you heard of the attack?

4           **CPL BASTARDO:** I was teaching. I was in the  
5 classroom.

6           **SGT JENNINGS:** Did you expect at that time or have  
7 a feeling that your unit, this unit would be called up?

8           **CPL BASTARDO:** I immediately when I -- what  
9 happened was we kind of like had to lock down the  
10 school. That was one of the first things, secure the  
11 school. Bring all the kids down to the cafeteria and  
12 hold them in place until further notice. And at that  
13 point, I actually used one of my colleague's cellular  
14 phone number to call down here and find out what was  
15 going on. And what they said was that more than likely  
16 we were going to get activated but there was no  
17 transportation at the time and a lot of complications.

18          I was just trying to find out what was happening, if  
19 we were going to come down or what.

20           **SGT JENNINGS:** How long did it take you to report  
21 after you were called up?

1           **CPL BASTARDO:** It actually -- I couldn't leave  
2 school until right after 6:30. That was when the last  
3 parent came to pick up the last kid that was assigned  
4 to me at the time.

5           **SGT JENNINGS:** And so you left directly from  
6 school?

7           **CPL BASTARDO:** I went to my house and changed,  
8 picked up my uniform and came down here. I probably  
9 made it here around 8:30ish, closer to 9 o'clock.

10          **SGT JENNINGS:** That is p.m., correct?

11          **CPL BASTARDO:** Yes.

12          **SGT JENNINGS:** How did you prepare yourself and  
13 your equipment for this mobilization?

14          **CPL BASTARDO:** I usually keep all my gear ready to  
15 go in my locker here. The only things that I take home  
16 are just my uniform, just press them, starch them, spit  
17 shine boots and stuff like that. So I just snagged my  
18 uniform out of my closet and just headed down here.  
19 All my equipment was in my locker so I just put my gear  
20 on and ready to go.

21          **SGT JENNINGS:** Now once here, as your company and

1 your platoon start to organize, did you receive any  
2 type of an operation order or fragmentary order?

3 **CPL BASTARDO:** In fact, we didn't really receive  
4 an official frag. We were basically just told to stand  
5 by and wait for further notice but basically that the  
6 mission was go down to ground zero and work as  
7 perimeter security. That was the gist of the  
8 operation, nothing formal.

9 **SGT JENNINGS:** Did you receive any instruction,  
10 formal or informal, as to rules of engagement?

11 **CPL BASTARDO:** Roger, yes. They told us we were  
12 going to be basically aiding, that we were going to be  
13 helping the police officers conduct the perimeter and  
14 they gave us a few guidelines as to like, okay, no  
15 press. Civilians that live in the area, keep them  
16 away. And that sort of thing. A general overview  
17 essentially.

18 **SGT JENNINGS:** I understand. And did they give  
19 you an indication within that briefing say if an unruly  
20 civilian had come along or a dangerous situation arose,  
21 as to what level you were to contact that person? In

1 other words, --

2 **CPL BASTARDO:** No contact at all. No contact at  
3 all. They told us that we should always defer to the  
4 police officers. That we basically were just helping  
5 them and they ultimately were the ones with the weapons  
6 and the ones with the professional training as to like  
7 seizing someone and apprehending them and that sort of  
8 thing.

9 **SGT JENNINGS:** Were you able to function as a fire  
10 team leader and keep your soldiers in control? Did you  
11 have your soldiers assigned to you?

12 **CPL BASTARDO:** Well, yes. There was really not  
13 much of a problem of control in the very first couple  
14 of days because the traffic was not very high. Things  
15 started getting a little out of hand a few days into  
16 the mission, about I would say five or six days into  
17 the mission when people were really, really trying to  
18 come around and snoop and people just trying to take  
19 pictures and that press. And that is when things  
20 actually -- control was a little bit, a little out of  
21 -- things didn't get completely out of control but it

1 was hard for us to actually like keep like hoards of  
2 people just trying to come to the points and just take  
3 pictures and stuff. So it was a little hectic but we  
4 maintained.

5 **SGT JENNINGS:** As a fire team leader, as a  
6 corporal, did you have any problems caring for your  
7 troops, was everything available for you?

8 **CPL BASTARDO:** No, not at all. Most of the check  
9 points that we were securing had either a Red Cross  
10 truck nearby that had food, drinks. And we had a medic  
11 with us that was checking on our feet because we were  
12 pulling pretty extended periods of time just like on  
13 our feet. So we had a medic that would come around and  
14 check people's feet. And I actually saw him pull  
15 somebody right to the side because this guy, his feet  
16 were pretty beat up. And this is a funny picture that  
17 I had in my head. Like I saw him on the side taking  
18 care of this guy around the corner and right on the  
19 other side there was like a mob of people just trying  
20 to come to our position. So it was kind of like one of  
21 those weird pictures, one of those weird images that

1 just get burned in your mind where you see this guy  
2 taking care of somebody's feet around the corner, away  
3 from the crowd, and the crowd just trying to just snoop  
4 and poop. It was one of those Kodak moments.

5 **SGT JENNINGS:** Since the mobilization, have you or  
6 any of your soldiers, had you gone through any type of  
7 administrative preparation, such as updating your  
8 records of emergency data, pay updates, wills?

9 **CPL BASTARDO:** Yes, we have. In fact, the very  
10 last day of our mission was a Sunday night. And,  
11 initially, they -- actually, they told us halfway  
12 through the mission, that we were going to go back on a  
13 Sunday and that we were going to be dismissed that same  
14 Sunday night. But, as it turned out, we realized that  
15 there was a lot of administrative stuff that had to be  
16 taken care of. We actually updated our rosters. And  
17 I, myself actually sat down behind the person's desk  
18 and actually went through the paperwork and I started  
19 calling my guys and said, "Okay, you need to tell me  
20 your address and your phone number" because we can't  
21 afford to have any phony addresses or phony phone



1 numbers in case that we get activated again. So it  
2 went pretty smooth. It went pretty smooth.

3 **SGT JENNINGS:** Now can you tell me from your  
4 position, your chain of command, can you go through it,  
5 who your squad leader is, so on and so forth, as high  
6 up as you know it? I don't necessarily need names,  
7 just the next person up.

8 **CPL BASTARDO:** My next higher?

9 **SGT JENNINGS:** In other words, as far as you know,  
10 tell me your chain of command as far up as you know?

11 **CPL BASTARDO:** Well, my squad leader is SGT Etalbo  
12 (phonetic). My platoon sergeant is SGT Cologne  
13 (phonetic). My first sergeant Asevedo (phonetic). My  
14 lieutenant is LT Gibbs, 2nd LT Gibbs. My commander is  
15 CPT Roya (phonetic). My lieutenant commander is LT COL  
16 Slack (phonetic). As far as the division commander, I  
17 can't tell you his name. I believe the current chief  
18 -- like the Army --

19 **SGT JENNINGS:** That is fine.

20 **CPL BASTARDO:** Okay, all right.

21 **SGT JENNINGS:** Also, did you have any indication

1 of what the chain of command, if you will, or  
2 relationship was between civilian authorities and the  
3 military?

4 **CPL BASTARDO:** We were not aware of that. That  
5 was happening a bit higher than us. And we were -- the  
6 information was trickling down. Slowly but surely it  
7 was trickling down. But we were not aware of what was  
8 happening between the civil authorities and our chain  
9 of command.

10 **SGT JENNINGS:** Did you receive any type of a  
11 communications plan? In other words, how were you  
12 supposed to communicate from your post to another post  
13 or to your platoon sergeant or NCO IC and beyond?

14 **CPL BASTARDO:** We were given 126 radios but those  
15 turned out not to work. And ultimately what we did was  
16 we got the PRC-77s. So we had one PRC-77 at every  
17 post.

18 The first couple of days communication was just  
19 basically people just kind of like doing round robins,  
20 just going out there finding out -- our lieutenant did  
21 an excellent job of keeping control and checking on the

1 troops, LT Gibbs. He did an excellent job on that and  
2 getting us the communication. It took a few days to  
3 get us the PRC-77s because the process of switching  
4 from the 126's to the 77s was a little bit complicated.

5 But we finally got those. Everything started running  
6 smooth, radio checks and everything.

7 **SGT JENNINGS:** Were you given any indication of  
8 procedure or process for contacting civilian  
9 authorities?

10 **CPL BASTARDO:** No, that didn't happen at our  
11 level. Maybe a lieutenant or higher but it didn't  
12 happen at our level.

13 **SGT JENNINGS:** Were you given a mission statement  
14 for this mission? In other words, you were given an  
15 unofficial fragmentary order. Did anyone tell you what  
16 your -- clearly define what your mission was in this  
17 operation?

18 **CPL BASTARDO:** To tell you the truth, my memory  
19 escapes me but the lieutenant did put out an official  
20 mission statement, he did. Within that mission  
21 statement, it was essentially perimeter guard and

1 helping the NYPD, the police department, and  
2 controlling both vehicle traffic and human traffic from  
3 Ground Zero, which at that time was a large perimeter.

4 It has shrunk since then but that is basically the  
5 mission statement. That is the gist of it. The  
6 wording of it, I couldn't recall but the lieutenant did  
7 put out a clear-cut statement.

8 **SGT JENNINGS:** Now as the fire team leader, did  
9 you find the support services, soldier support services  
10 were adequate? In other words, you were able to feed  
11 your soldiers, keep them properly clothed, everything  
12 along that line?

13 **CPL BASTARDO:** Yes, yes, it was excellent.

14 **SGT JENNINGS:** Did you have an understanding of  
15 how you were to access those services?

16 **CPL BASTARDO:** Yes, we put in place a system of  
17 hourly -- like we would take -- we would spend a few  
18 hours on and then one hour off. And during that hour,  
19 we would talk about what we need, how are people doing.

20 And we actually had a break area where people can keep  
21 like gear if they would get cold, people can keep extra

1 stuff. And that is how we worked it out. Like I said,  
2 we had the Red Cross out there really taking care of  
3 people very well.

4 **SGT JENNINGS:** Did you have any force protection  
5 concerns?

6 **CPL BASTARDO:** What do you mean?

7 **SGT JENNINGS:** Force protection is the act of  
8 taking care of the soldier in a place where normally he  
9 wouldn't be at risk, having basically security for the  
10 security? Were you concerned when you were on post  
11 that there could be another terrorist incident, that  
12 you could be shot at or you could be overrun?

13 **CPL BASTARDO:** That was a concern that we had all  
14 along. It is one of those things that you fear. But  
15 you are out there, you are doing your job. You do your  
16 job. And you try to do your job the best you can. But  
17 it is just one of those things that you just never know  
18 and that is one of the reasons why we were out there  
19 trying to keep the crowds away. So that we didn't have  
20 an incident like that. But this is one of those things  
21 that you are just never 100 percent sure. And you just

1 keep your eye on the look-out for it.

2 **SGT JENNINGS:** Were you armed at any time?

3 **CPL BASTARDO:** No, we were not allowed weapons,  
4 period.

5 **SGT JENNINGS:** Do you know if -- were your weapons  
6 taken out of the armory?

7 **CPL BASTARDO:** Yes, we did have weapons available  
8 to us in case a riot broke out or in case of any  
9 complex situation. We actually had a truck out there  
10 with us, and we had M-16s on the racks. And we could  
11 have -- we had an armory with us at all times, and we  
12 could have accessed those weapons if need be.

13 **SGT JENNINGS:** Right. And to finish with, do you  
14 have any personal stories, anything you want to tell  
15 us, even if it is just your insight on the operation?

16 **CPL BASTARDO:** To tell you the truth, this is one  
17 of those things, I was in the active Army. And in  
18 1994, when this whole thing happened down in Haiti,  
19 this whole Operation Uphold Democracy, bringing this  
20 president back into place and stuff, we did a lot of  
21 kind of like MP police work. We did some raids and we

1 did a lot of things where we had to wear flack vests  
2 24/7 and all these things. And I always had this idea  
3 that those were things I was to experience in far away  
4 lands. But when I actually saw it happening in New  
5 York City, my mind was boggled. I used to walk around,  
6 and everyday I just told myself that I never thought  
7 that I was ever to experience something like this in  
8 the heart of New York City. So to me that was like the  
9 most outlandish thing, to be walking around Manhattan,  
10 like the heart of Manhattan downtown in a flack vest,  
11 on the look-out for any possible like terrorist acts.  
12 To tell you the truth, today still I am kind of shaken  
13 by it. And I don't know if I have actually come to the  
14 terms with the fact that the towers are no longer  
15 there. It is just one of those things that it is  
16 probably going to take a little bit to sink in.

17 But for me the biggest thing was just walking  
18 around the city wearing all this stuff and just looking  
19 out for security. I never thought that I was ever  
20 going to live the day to see that.

21 **SGT JENNINGS:** You answered before but I am going

1 to ask again. What grade level do you teach?

2 **CPL BASTARDO:** Middle school.

3 **SGT JENNINGS:** So 6th, 7th grade?

4 **CPL BASTARDO:** Well, 7th and 8th grade, actually.

5 **SGT JENNINGS:** 7th and 8th grade?

6 **CPL BASTARDO:** Yes.

7 **SGT JENNINGS:** What would you, when you go back to  
8 the classroom and with the typical curiosity with a  
9 seventh grade is going to have for an event like this,  
10 what are you going to tell them when they say, "Well,  
11 what was it like? What did you see?"

12 **CPL BASTARDO:** I have already gone back, and we  
13 actually -- I haven't gotten a chance to actually teach  
14 in the classroom yet because we have been doing a lot  
15 of back-briefs and a lot of counseling. And one of the  
16 first things that my kids asked me when I went back was  
17 who is Osama Bin Laden? I was kind of like shocked  
18 because how can I explain to this 12-year-old that this  
19 is a terrorist, who actually just basically the whole  
20 world. And I kind of like paused for a second. And I  
21 told them he is somebody who really had a rough life



1 and because of that, he does not like people. And the  
2 kid asked me, "So people who have rough lives don't  
3 like everybody else?" And I said, "On average, that is  
4 what happens. If your life is rough, you are going to  
5 tend not to like people because you are going to blame  
6 other people for how bad your life is." And that was  
7 like one of the most -- the question really took me  
8 aback. And I kind of like paused and I really didn't  
9 know what to answer but that is the answer I gave. I  
10 am not sure if that is the right or the wrong answer.  
11 I don't know if there is a right or wrong answer to  
12 something like that.

13 But the kids are pretty cautious these days. You  
14 would be surprised because there is so much media going  
15 around and so much information flowing, that you would  
16 be surprised how much they know. So the first thing  
17 was who is Osama Bin Laden? I was like, wow, this kid  
18 asked me.

19 **SGT JENNINGS:** All right, thank you very much.

20 **CPL BASTARDO:** All right.

21 **SGT JENNINGS:** This is SGT Patrick Jennings, 126th

1 Military History Detachment. It is 29 September 2001.

2 The time is 1345.

3 (The interview was concluded at 1:45 p.m.)

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