

NATIONAL GUARD BUREAU  
Historical Services Branch

**Interview NGB-12**

INTERVIEW OF

1SG JOSEPH RANAURO  
HHC, 1st Battalion, 101st Cavalry

CONDUCTED BY

MAJ LES' MELNYK  
National Guard Bureau

Wednesday, September 19, 2001

Transcript reviewed by 1SG Ranauro and returned without  
comment, January 2002

TAPE TRANSCRIPTION

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

2 **MAJ MELNYK:** This is MAJ Les' Melnyk, the Army  
3 National Guard Historian at the National Guard Bureau,  
4 and I am interviewing 1SG Joseph L. Ranauro. I spell  
5 R-a-n-a-u-r-o.

6 He is the first sergeant of HHC, 1st  
7 Battalion, 101st Cavalry, located in the armory on  
8 Slossen Avenue in Staten Island.

9 This interview is taking place on the 19th of  
10 September, on the steps of the U.S. Customs House, at  
11 the lower tip of Manhattan.

12 1SG Ranauro, you have read and signed the oral  
13 history access agreement and agreed that everything you  
14 say here can be used by the Army however they use.

15 **1SG RANAURO:** Yes, I do.

16 **MAJ MELNYK:** I'd like for you to start by  
17 briefly telling us what you do both in a military and  
18 civilian capacity, and maybe a brief synopsis of your  
19 military career.

20 **1SG RANAURO:** In the military, I'm currently  
21 the HHC First Sergeant for the 101st CAV. Prior to

1 that, I was the Alpha Company First Sergeant for about  
2 three years.

3           Prior to that, I had the Mortar Platoon for  
4 two years. Prior to that, I was an E-8 and I was the  
5 Master Gunner for the CAV Squadron, and progression  
6 down from there was a platoon sergeant in a line  
7 company, tank commander, gunner.

8           Prior to that, I was in the New York Air  
9 National Guard. I came into the service in 1971.

10           My civilian job, I'm a senior court officer  
11 for the New York State Court System in the State of New  
12 York. I've been on the job for 32 years, 28 of them  
13 have been in the capacity as an officer in the lower  
14 courts.

15           All my time has been spent in the criminal  
16 term. My various assignments have been working in  
17 courtrooms. I'm also on the Judicial Protection  
18 Program, with guards all our judges with death threats  
19 and emergency service type of operations, and we  
20 currently have the anti-terrorist perimeter patrol  
21 around all the courthouses in lower Manhattan that are

1 run by the State of New York.

2 **MAJ MELNYK:** If you would, 1SG Ranauro, go  
3 back to Tuesday, September 11. Where were you -- your  
4 situation is somewhat unique.

5 Describe your reactions when the attack  
6 occurred.

7 **1SG RANAURO:** We had just turned out for our  
8 day tour. We turn out at 08 in the morning. Myself,  
9 four other officers, are -- all our bosses were in  
10 Albany that -- had left for Albany that morning to --  
11 as it happens, they were going up there for a briefing  
12 on weapons of mass destruction.

13 **MAJ MELNYK:** And you work where?

14 **1SG RANAURO:** I work at 100 Center Street.  
15 That's in lower Manhattan. The cross streets are West  
16 Street, Center, and we cover basically the family,  
17 civil, and the criminal court buildings are located  
18 down there. It's principally five buildings that we  
19 are assigned to patrol.

20 **MAJ MELNYK:** About how far from the World  
21 Trade Center is that?

1           **1SG RANAURO:** I would say it is about the  
2 distance of about eight to ten city blocks. It's about  
3 five to eight minutes walking distance from our  
4 building.

5           **MAJ MELNYK:** When did you become aware of the  
6 attack and what did you do?

7           **1SG RANAURO:** During -- during the week, every  
8 once a while, we hear military jets, they come down the  
9 Hudson, I guess, sightseeing or whatever, and we had  
10 heard a jet coming. We assumed from the sound of it it  
11 was a military type jet.

12           **MAJ MELNYK:** You were inside or outside?

13           **1SG RANAURO:** We were outside the building.  
14 My whole detail of -- the five of us at that point were  
15 outside on patrol.

16           We heard the jet approaching, and I'm a pilot  
17 myself, and one of the things I commented to one of my  
18 coworkers was the FAA is going to have this guy,  
19 because he was very, very low.

20           Then from behind one of the buildings on the  
21 west side, we had seen the airliner basically come up

1 and slam into the side of the World Trade Center.

2           **MAJ MELNYK:** What direction was the airliner  
3 coming?

4           **1SG RANAURO:** He was going from north to  
5 south.

6           **MAJ MELNYK:** So down the Hudson River.

7           **1SG RANAURO:** Down -- right. Correct. Down  
8 the Hudson River. Initial reaction from most of us was  
9 that it was a pilot who probably had a mechanical  
10 failure and my reaction was it was probably trying to  
11 ditch the plane into the harbor and he wasn't able to  
12 make it.

13                   Right after we saw the plane come in, my  
14 detail gathered up all our guys, which was a detail of  
15 ten men, ten officers, most paramedics and EMTs, we got  
16 all our equipment, our oxygen bottles, our trauma bags  
17 and everything else, threw them in the van and headed  
18 toward the World Trade Center.

19                   About halfway there, we caught the very, very  
20 tail end of the second plane striking the building. He  
21 came up from the southerly direction, popped up almost

1 in like an F-16 type maneuver, attack thing.

2 He tried -- it appeared that he tried to bank  
3 the aircraft sideways into the building, but he wasn't  
4 able to do that. He was in too much of a bank to keep  
5 it that way. The plane would have turned and missed  
6 it.

7 So he leveled the wings and went into the  
8 south tower from the south side.

9 We had, myself and my guys, along with all the  
10 firefighters and police officers that were down there  
11 had to back off because of all the debris coming off  
12 the building.

13 **MAJ MELNYK:** What was your reaction? Did your  
14 assessment change at that point?

15 **1SG RANAURO:** Yeah. Right after that, we  
16 figured it was some type of attack or something like  
17 that. It was too much of a coincidence that two planes  
18 would hit the same type of building at the same time.

19 And since we go through a lot of training for  
20 this stuff, that was our assessment right away.

21 We had to back off from the building. There

1 was too much debris coming down. We helped civilians  
2 get out of the area, told them to just keep running  
3 north or towards the East River.

4           When the debris subsided a little bit, we  
5 moved towards the north tower, down on -- at that  
6 point, we were on -- we had just turned southbound on  
7 West Broadway and we were stationary there, waiting for  
8 a lot of debris to come down.

9           We were telling people to run north and east  
10 towards the river. Once the debris had stopped to a  
11 manageable level, we started down West Broadway,  
12 towards the buildings.

13           We met with members of New York Police  
14 Department, Fire Department, and EMS, and explained to  
15 them we have paramedics, we're all trained, where do  
16 you need help.

17           **MAJ MELNYK:** What was the scene like there at  
18 the plaza?

19           **1SG RANAURO:** The scene on West Broadway  
20 coming up onto Vesey Street, which is the north street  
21 on the northern side of the World Trade complex.



1           **MAJ MELNYK:** Northern side of the -- right.

2           **1SG RANAURO:** The scene was pieces of  
3 aircraft, one of the engines of one of the aircraft,  
4 glass, debris, hands, limbs, all types of body parts.  
5 As we got closer, it got worse and worse.

6           A lot of soot and smoke from the debris that  
7 had fallen and a lot of damage to the surrounding  
8 buildings, as we got closer to it.

9           About a block away from Vesey Street, when we  
10 were still going southbound toward the towers, people  
11 were jumping out of the building. Three people came  
12 out. The fourth came out and he was on fire and came  
13 down.

14           We found out later on that a couple of these  
15 people fell on firefighters and killed them as they  
16 were walking and responding.

17           We went around the west side of the towers,  
18 which would be on the Church Street side, and they were  
19 evacuating people next to the -- on the corner of Vesey  
20 and Church, which would be the northwest corner,  
21 there's Border's Book Store and there's a very large

1 overhang from Border's.

2 Correction on the location of Border's. It's  
3 the northeast side of the -- I believe it's Six World  
4 Trade. The map is too small. I really can't read it.

5 **MAJ MELNYK:** Right. Definitely the northeast  
6 corner of the complex.

7 **1SG RANAURO:** Right. They were evacuating  
8 people from the sub-levels, the escalators had come up  
9 into the lobby behind Border's, they run adjacent  
10 behind the Border's Book Store, which is L-shaped. It  
11 runs right around to Vesey Street.

12 And the police department had a line of  
13 people, some -- a couple of the officers had bull  
14 horns, telling the people do not use cell phones, do  
15 not look up, and head to Broadway. That's where the  
16 triage is, and all the rest of the medical help was  
17 waiting for them up there.

18 So we helped -- so my ten guys helped get a  
19 lot of those people out. I would say probably about  
20 seven or eight hundred people, before the building  
21 started to come down.

1           At some point, maybe about ten minutes after,  
2 we got on the line near the doorway to help either  
3 carry people or rush them out of the building.

4           About eight officers from our academy, which  
5 is down here on Williams Street, had seen the incident  
6 and they came up to help. Some of them are EMTs, and  
7 they joined with us.

8           Probably after about ten minutes, EMS came out  
9 and said we need paramedics in the basement, that we  
10 have a lot of burn victims.

11           And my partner, Tommy Jergens, CPT Harry  
12 Thompson from the academy, Officer Tai Bacon from my  
13 building -- he doesn't work in my detail, but he's also  
14 a paramedic -- and one of the other officers who was  
15 off duty coming to work saw what happened, he's also a  
16 paramedic, he joined in, and he was only in our command  
17 about a week. I really didn't even know him.

18           I heard his name being mentioned. They  
19 responded to the EMS that was on Church Street and got  
20 the little folding chairs with wheels on it and headed  
21 down into the basement.

1           And we were all kind of looking at one  
2 another, not understanding why there would be so many  
3 burn victims. We found out later on that all the jet  
4 fuel went down the elevator shafts and flooded the  
5 lower levels with jet fuel.

6           **MAJ MELNYK:** That was my question, as well.

7           **1SG RANAURO:** So my four guys came out, along  
8 with my partner, Tommy Jergens, came out and they had  
9 four very bad burn victims. They were probably burned  
10 over 60 percent of their body.

11           They brought them to EMS and they were removed  
12 to the burn center, I believe, at Bellevue.

13           My guys went back down again. I gripped my  
14 partner, Tommy, I said, "Tommy, stay up here with us,"  
15 and his last words to me, it turns out that he says,  
16 "Joe, there's people down needing help, plus we're all  
17 paramedics."

18           He was a combat medic. He was assigned to the  
19 69th Infantry with the New York National Guard. Before  
20 that, he was with, I believe, the 82nd, but I'm not --  
21 either the 82nd or the 101st.

1           **MAJ MELNYK:** Would he have served in the 69th?

2           **1SG RANAURO:** Yeah. Yes, he did. In fact,  
3 his enlistment had just ended and he was going to  
4 switch over to our unit. He had just gotten married  
5 four months ago and he was waiting to get settled in  
6 with his wife and everything else and he was going to  
7 reenlist with the 101st CAV.

8           They went back down into the basement. We  
9 were still continuing to get people out, and I would  
10 say it was maybe about -- and the time frames, I look  
11 them now in the newspapers, and it seemed like it was  
12 just slow motion.

13           So when I say maybe it was 20 minutes later,  
14 it may have been a half hour. The times were very  
15 blurry.

16           It seemed like about 20 minutes after they had  
17 gone back down to get another load of burn victims that  
18 were down here, we heard popping sounds that initially  
19 we didn't know what they were.

20           Maybe about a minute after we heard them, we  
21 thought there were explosions in the south tower and

1 one of the guys I work with, Teddy Leosokis (phonetic,)   
2 says to me, "Joe," he says, "take a look at the   
3 building," and it was actually waving.

4           The whole building was waving all the way   
5 from, I would say, maybe about the tenth floor all the   
6 way up.

7           **MAJ MELNYK:** The outer skin.

8           **1SG RANAURO:** Right. The outer skin of the   
9 building had waves in it, like you see in the movie or   
10 something like that.

11           We looked across the plaza, looking towards --   
12 looking eastward towards Church and up to Broadway, and   
13 there was a lot of people there and internally, I said   
14 to myself, I'm not going to be able to run and make it   
15 through that, because we assumed that the buildings   
16 were going to topple one way or the other.

17           And we chose to all pile into the lobby of the   
18 -- right behind the Border's. We got about 40 or 50   
19 feet into the lobby. We turned the corner going -- we   
20 were going northbound behind Border's in the lobby.

21           Then we made the turn going westbound, and we

1 got maybe up the second set -- there's a small, I  
2 think, six stairs in there.

3 I got to the first step and the rush of the  
4 wind and the debris blew us about ten feet further into  
5 the lobby and just -- we were just basically buried in  
6 there.

7 **MAJ MELNYK:** So the debris --

8 **1SG RANAURO:** Right. I made the first step.  
9 The gush of the air and the debris blew us in there, I  
10 guess, about ten or fifteen feet, and everything went  
11 black. Just tons of dust and nobody could breath for,  
12 I would say, a good three to four minutes. Nobody  
13 could catch their breath.

14 I mean, I was gasping to the point where I  
15 thought, well, I may not die getting crushed here, but  
16 I might wind up having a goddamn heart attack. And we  
17 were all laying down on the ground.

18 It was mostly firefighters, police officers,  
19 my guys, a part of my guys.

20 **MAJ MELNYK:** How many of your guys?

21 **1SG RANAURO:** That were actually in there,

1 there was, I guess, about seven of us that were in that  
2 particular area.

3 **MAJ MELNYK:** Right.

4 **1SG RANAURO:** So we're laying, it's pitch  
5 black, you can't see anything. One of the guys I work  
6 with, Teddy, who I mentioned before, was about six  
7 inches from my face. When I finally got my breath, the  
8 first thing I yelled out was, "Teddy, where are you."  
9 He's yelling into my ear, "I'm right next to you."

10 Our eyes are covered, our ears had stuff in  
11 them, and basically everybody had their tee shirts up  
12 around their mouths and trying to block off all the  
13 stuff that we were ingesting at that point.

14 One of the female sergeants from the academy,  
15 Pat Manarano (phonetic,) was right behind me and,  
16 again, she yelled in my ear, and then we started -- it  
17 was like touching one another and we're alive at this  
18 point.

19 And then we started to -- the officers and the  
20 firefighters in there started to go in opposite  
21 directions to see which way we were able to get out,



1 and it was blocked on both sides.

2           At some point, the Port Authority emergency  
3 service cop who was in there with us got his bearings  
4 and he was able to breath. He had a little bit of  
5 debris on his legs. They pulled him out.

6           But everybody -- as far as I know, everybody  
7 came out unscathed. And there was also probably, I  
8 guess, about ten or fifteen civilians in there with us.

9           He says, "Guys, everybody" -- you know, nobody  
10 was panicking or anything. We finally got all our  
11 flashlights on. He says, "I know where we are," and we  
12 managed to break -- we managed to break the north  
13 glass, rear glass of Border's into the book store  
14 itself.

15           Once the glass came down, we felt a little  
16 fresh air coming through. So we knew somewhere there  
17 was some type of opening, whether it was to the outside  
18 or into one of the other buildings.

19           Basically, everybody was hands on shoulders or  
20 hands on gun belts or whatever we could grab, and we  
21 started heading, and then there's people on the outside

1 that started clearing debris from the north -- the  
2 Vesey Street entrance to Border's, which is on the  
3 north side of the building, and we were able to get out  
4 that way.

5 All of us were directed to Broadway, near city  
6 hall, I think it was Park Place, and EMS was there  
7 doing basically eye washes and getting our ears  
8 cleaned, because we were covered -- covered with dust  
9 and small pieces of -- it looked like snowflakes, of  
10 some type of insulation, and, with our luck, it's  
11 probably asbestos and we'll all be dead in ten years.

12 But -- so most of us headed -- most of the  
13 guys headed up towards Broadway and I think it was Park  
14 Place. We were cleaned out as much as we could get by  
15 emergency -- the EMS people up there.

16 We were all waiting up there and on our radios  
17 trying to account for everybody and little by little,  
18 all the guys from our detail were checking in, except  
19 for one of them, which is my partner, Tommy Jergens.

20 We found out later on he was either in the  
21 second or the third level, we're not sure. He's still

1 down there, him, Harry Thompson, and one of our other  
2 personnel. So we don't think, as of this point, nobody  
3 has heard anything and I don't think they made it out.

4           So we're standing on Broadway near city hall  
5 and that's when the north tower came down. Again, time  
6 frame wise, I'm sure you could look it and it's, you  
7 know, it's documented, but everything was moving very  
8 slow for us.

9           At that point, we gathered up as many of our  
10 guys as we could. We went towards Canal Street, which  
11 is northbound on -- northbound on Broadway, because my  
12 son, who is also -- who was a copy, was stationed up  
13 there, I wanted to go check on him.

14           And then eventually we returned to our  
15 building. We counted heads and we realized we had  
16 missing personnel.

17           At some point, I think it was about 2:00  
18 o'clock in the afternoon, my detail and another bunch,  
19 I guess about another 25 officers, went back down to  
20 help with the digging, but at that point it was chaos  
21 down there and they weren't allowing anybody in.

1           So we went back to the command. I went back  
2 into my building. I spent maybe about 15 minutes in my  
3 building, until I looked out the window, and I says,  
4 "I'm out of here, I ain't staying in this building."  
5 Washed my hair, got home, and I guess about 10:00  
6 o'clock at night, I reported to the armory because the  
7 unit had been activated.

8           **MAJ MELNYK:** Where is home, again, for you?

9           **1SG RANAURO:** I live on Staten Island.

10          **MAJ MELNYK:** You live on Staten Island.

11          **1SG RANAURO:** Right.

12          **MAJ MELNYK:** When you reported to the armory,  
13 what situation did you find with your company? What  
14 orders were you given? Were you able to provide  
15 information that they didn't have?

16          **1SG RANAURO:** Yeah. I provided as to what we  
17 had seen and what we experienced. By then, most of the  
18 HHC and Alpha Company, which is also on Staten Island,  
19 were in. The other three line companies from upstate  
20 New York were on their way in at that point and  
21 basically everybody met up on Wednesday morning.

1           The people running it from Troop Command was  
2 the normal chaos from them. They told us to report to  
3 Battery Park City.

4           I had at least 30 soldiers from my medical  
5 platoon, transportation, and maintenance platoons  
6 working up on One Liberty Plaza at the makeshift morgue  
7 that was up there, and, also, quite a few of them got  
8 into the actual dig site.

9           The dig site was utterly chaos. Most of the  
10 experts that handle this type of thing from the fire  
11 department were killed in the building collapses.

12           So really there was -- all the smart guys at  
13 that point were gone and it was basically each section  
14 was doing things the way they wanted to do it.

15           However, when I was up there with our morgue  
16 personnel, speaking to the lieutenants and some of the  
17 people from the police and fire departments, when I  
18 told them we had a 100 soldiers down here to help, they  
19 were elated

20           But once it was pushed up through higher, I  
21 guess through the Mayor's office, they said no, no

1 National Guardsmen will be in there digging. But some  
2 of our guys did get down into the site and actually did  
3 dig.

4           It was very frustrating for all the soldiers  
5 not to be able to get in and lend a hand, when you see  
6 civilians who are walking around the streets, in the  
7 site helping and this, that and the other, and we had  
8 over a 100 men that could have went in there to help  
9 and we were denied access to highers.

10           So what our guys did was just interface here  
11 on the ground. Most of my soldiers are police  
12 officers, firefighters, EMTs, and this, that and the  
13 other.

14           So they went to the low level, the guys  
15 actually doing work on the ground, and they were given  
16 missions right from there and we kind of like just  
17 stayed away from all the Troop Command and the Mayor's  
18 office and everything else, and that's the way we were  
19 able to help down there.

20           It was just really chaos in that area, until  
21 they got organized, which was about -- I guess about

1 four days into it.

2 **MAJ MELNYK:** What was your primary function as  
3 the first sergeant? What were you -- what kept you  
4 busy? What were your challenges?

5 **1SG RANAURO:** My primary job, after getting  
6 all my people in, was deploying the assets of the HHC  
7 Company, which is mechanics, medics, scouts, mortars,  
8 which the scouts and the mortars were used primarily  
9 for security missions.

10 **MAJ MELNYK:** They're traditional jobs.

11 **1SG RANAURO:** Right. The Mortar Platoon was  
12 lumped in with the scouts, because they're ground type  
13 infantry guys.

14 **MAJ MELNYK:** Right.

15 **1SG RANAURO:** And they basically helped to  
16 provide security details. The maintenance guys had to  
17 get some equipment up here to support us.

18 The medics brought all our -- all our  
19 ambulances were brought up here and our transportation  
20 assets, we brought up three or four fueller Hemmets and  
21 they were both up.

1           At some point during the first three or four  
2 days, the fire department actually started running out  
3 of diesel in the pit and we supplied them with, I  
4 believe, two Hemmets to refuel a lot of their stuff.

5           And my one section was back in the armory  
6 taking care of the payrolls and everything else and  
7 basically the two-three shop ran on top, on site over  
8 here.

9           The biggest challenge I had was to motivate  
10 the men. All my soldiers were motivated to go out and  
11 work, but most of them that they were being denied the  
12 chance to do that and to actually get in there and help  
13 dig and this, that and the other, and that was the most  
14 frustrating thing, to keep the morale up and say,  
15 listen, we're doing other missions that are just as  
16 important, and they have the experts in there.

17           But when you see civilians in there who we  
18 know are not experts, it was very, very frustrating for  
19 myself and for --

20           **MAJ MELNYK:** Did -- I'm sure you felt the same  
21 way yourself, but with your friends and partners there.



1           **1SG RANAURO:** Yes. Yes, very much so.

2           **MAJ MELNYK:** How much did -- how busy were  
3 you? How much did that weigh on you and affect you  
4 personally, or were you so busy that you forgot about  
5 it?

6           **1SG RANAURO:** There was enough moving the  
7 company from Staten Island to Manhattan and all the  
8 support elements that we needed to do this with.

9           The initial plan to move is basically move a  
10 lot of our assets over here, assuming that they might  
11 be needed. So it was basically a sort out type of  
12 thing, saying yeah, we'll probably need our heavy  
13 Hemmets over there.

14          **MAJ MELNYK:** Right.

15          **1SG RANAURO:** As it turns out, they've moved a  
16 lot of food stocks for the volunteers that are cooking  
17 on site, this, that and the other, a lot of bottled  
18 water, et cetera, et cetera, and also moved troops from  
19 point A to B down here, and just tried to sort out and  
20 figure what possibly would be needed.

21          Naturally, a lot of generators and stuff like

1 that. Home Depot, immediately, Tuesday night, after  
2 this has happened, donated \$40,000 worth of generators  
3 and picks and shovels and everything else.

4 So that was probably the biggest thing, to put  
5 together a package to support what we needed to do up  
6 here.

7 **MAJ MELNYK:** Kept you very busy.

8 **1SG RANAURO:** Yes. That kept us busy. It was  
9 til like maybe a day or two later that I had some down  
10 time, that it really totally sunk in that my partner  
11 might -- there was a good possibility my partner and  
12 some of my friends might be gone, and, also, I had  
13 Tommy's wife, who just got married four months ago,  
14 calling me up saying, you know, "Have you heard from  
15 him, when was the last time you saw him," that kind of  
16 stuff.

17 **MAJ MELNYK:** And you had to explain that to  
18 her.

19 **1SG RANAURO:** Yeah. We had to sit down, speak  
20 to her over the phone, because I'm on active duty and I  
21 couldn't get over there. But other members of my unit

1 have been in contact with her and I think at some point  
2 this week they are going out to see her.

3 **MAJ MELNYK:** What about your own family? How  
4 did you let them know that you were okay?

5 **1SG RANAURO:** Initially, right after the first  
6 plane hit, I got my cell phone and called my son, who  
7 works -- my younger son, who works uptown for a wine  
8 importer, and told him to immediately get out of the  
9 city.

10 My older guy, my older son, who is an officer  
11 in the 68 precinct, I had called him and he had seen  
12 it, because from Bay Ridge, you can see the towers. He  
13 had seen basically the whole thing.

14 And then I told my wife, I said don't even  
15 think about going to work, just stay home. And I  
16 checked on my mom and all this was in -- all these  
17 phone calls are made probably while all the guys were  
18 getting all the emergency bags out of the building down  
19 there.

20 **MAJ MELNYK:** But after the collapse, did you  
21 try and -- cell phone traffic was --

1           **1SG RANAURO:** Cell phone traffic was a  
2 nightmare. At that point, nobody in my family knew I  
3 had gone down there. I don't know if that was good or  
4 bad. But later on, I heard a ratiion of screaming and  
5 yelling from my sons and this, that and the other.

6           **MAJ MELNYK:** You were warning them out of the  
7 city and you were --

8           **1SG RANAURO:** Yeah, I was trying. Right. I  
9 knew my son, my oldest son, who was a police officer,  
10 would probably have to come in at some point, that's  
11 his job, and he's also a tank commander with Alpha  
12 Company with the 101st.

13           So he was with the police department down at  
14 the dig site for I think two days and then he got  
15 called up and he came in.

16           So he is here in the National Guard capacity  
17 right now.

18           **MAJ MELNYK:** How -- you've described some of  
19 the different things that all of your different  
20 headquarters soldiers have done.

21           How have they been performing? What is their

1 morale like and how was the tragedy here affecting  
2 them?

3           **1SG RANAURO:** Their performance after the --  
4 the initial -- the initial chaotic -- how can I put it  
5 -- atmosphere of the first four or five days, being  
6 frustrated, not getting up there to help and this, that  
7 and the other, has pretty much calmed down.

8           They know the professionals are in there doing  
9 it. They know the fire department basically cleaned  
10 house on the site up there and it's all professionals  
11 now in there.

12           And we have a defined mission of providing  
13 security in lower Manhattan. And once that mission  
14 came out and the guys basically knew what was going on  
15 and what their mission was going to be, they've gone  
16 out and done a superb job.

17           The guys and the female soldiers and the male  
18 soldiers who volunteered for the morgue details, these  
19 are, for the most part, a lot of young medics who are  
20 college students and they, without hesitation, went in  
21 there and started moving body parts, and helping

1 various doctors try to make IDs of bodies and watch  
2 some of the proceedings that were going on in there and  
3 carried body parts and bodies in and out, going up to  
4 the morgue.

5           So there is a corps of about 30 people that  
6 were doing that for, I guess, about three days  
7 straight, and they did nothing short of a super human  
8 job of jumping into a situation and seeing these  
9 grotesque things, of a five year old kid, decapitated  
10 bodies, and body parts, and never flinched and went  
11 back for three days in a row and performed their duty  
12 in 12 hour shifts.

13           **MAJ MELNYK:** How are they holding up?

14           **1SG RANAURO:** Right now we're in the process  
15 of -- the 42nd has brought in counselors from -- I'm  
16 not sure which unit. In fact, just before you, I was  
17 speaking to the major over there. She talked to me for  
18 about an hour about what I went through and losing the  
19 people I lost.

20           And today, during the day, she was on Staten  
21 Island talking to some of our young medics that were

1 there on the scene. And it's definitely going to have  
2 to be an ongoing -- well, I don't know if you call it  
3 treatment, but a continuing support thing for the  
4 soldiers who went through this.

5           They may not show it now, but I'm sure it's  
6 going to scar them for life, and right now it looks  
7 like one of the good things that Troop Command has done  
8 has gotten these counselors in here to help us.

9           We also have one of our senior NCOs on Staten  
10 Island who is affiliated with the American Red Cross  
11 and he has been nice enough, the doctors on Staten  
12 Island will do this, have been volunteering to come  
13 into the armory and talk to us, all this as a --

14           What we have planned is when we come off  
15 active duty, they are going to give us a one hour  
16 seminar type of thing on what the different symptoms  
17 are, which I probably have, I guess, about seven out of  
18 ten right now.

19           And then they will be available for individual  
20 counseling sessions, and the people from the Army said  
21 they will be coming to our armory every two or three

1 months for the next year to speak to soldiers and --

2 **MAJ MELNYK:** To check up on them.

3 **1SG RANAURO:** Yeah. One of the big things is,  
4 you know, everybody's a big he man and this, that and  
5 the other. I'm no hero. I've been through a lot in my  
6 life, I've seen a lot, and it's affecting me. So.

7 **MAJ MELNYK:** You're in the phase now where  
8 things are starting to relax and get routine.

9 **1SG RANAURO:** Right. We're starting to get  
10 into some type of routine and other than I'm having a  
11 lot of problems sleeping, because I keep replaying  
12 things and this, that and the other.

13 So what I did was the local newspapers are  
14 putting out what to look for and what to do to help  
15 that. And so I've been trying to -- they say eat right  
16 and this, that and the other. The only problem is the  
17 sleep problem is -- you know, you only get X amount of  
18 days when you're off shift and you try to make the best  
19 of it.

20 **MAJ MELNYK:** Looking at this now, you're due  
21 to go off, the current plan is go back and return to



1 your armory on Saturday; is that correct?

2 **1SG RANAURO:** Yeah. That's what I'm hearing  
3 right now.

4 **MAJ MELNYK:** When you start thinking about the  
5 after action review, what kind of comments are you  
6 going to make, both positive and negative, about this  
7 operation?

8 **1SG RANAURO:** Last night, we happened to be up  
9 at the JAG's office and we saw the DOD plan for  
10 evacuation in emergencies, this type of thing. And the  
11 date on it was from 1991. I think that needs to be  
12 revised.

13 I think parts of the plan are very good, just  
14 thumbing through it quick, but other parts do not have  
15 a contingency plan for this type or this magnitude of  
16 disaster.

17 Usually it's like tidal waves, tornadoes, that  
18 type of stuff. But there is no plan in place for this  
19 type of thing in a built up urban area like New York  
20 City.

21 The other recommendations, talking to myself,

1 my NCOs and the officers, is they need to get a command  
2 structure in place that is more reactive and can  
3 interface better with the local authorities in New York  
4 City.

5 I have been through probably about eight  
6 activations with this unit, whether it be snow storms,  
7 hurricanes, tidal floods, and this, that and the other.

8 The Troop Command that is run from upstate really has  
9 no idea how the civilian authorities work down here.

10 They send liaisons down. They do help, to a  
11 certain extent, but most of the guys in the units that  
12 are stationed down here, i.e., the 69th, my unit, 258,  
13 we work here every day.

14 Most of our members, most of the soldiers in  
15 our units are firefighters, police officers, court  
16 officers, ESU type people.

17 And we get a lot more done by interfacing on a  
18 very, very low level than you could ever imagine  
19 getting done coming from the Troop Command and the  
20 Mayor's office.

21 The other big part of the problem, and we've

1 seen it a couple times already, is the political side  
2 of it, where the government says, yes, says to the  
3 Mayor, you will get troops in here, and the Mayor  
4 basically says okay, if I have to have them, let's just  
5 have them do menial things and that's the end of it, my  
6 fire department and my police department can handle  
7 anything, and a couple of times that's come back to  
8 bite him in the rear end, where units have been sent to  
9 support Long Island and then were brought back to  
10 support -- went in the five boroughs of the City of New  
11 York.

12           So I think there's a lot of political pulling  
13 back and forth over the Guard and the command structure  
14 needs to be probably brought down to a level to the  
15 units that are actually in the city and work for the  
16 city and pick up a phone and say to a deputy inspector  
17 from the police department I have a 100 people here,  
18 where do you need them now, rather than wait six hours  
19 to go to the Mayor's office, EOC and all the other  
20 bureaucratic stuff that really holds us up from doing a  
21 lot of missions that we could do within an hour's worth

1 of reaction time.

2           Simple missions, like the ground zero would  
3 run out of water, the site on Staten Island, the Staten  
4 Island dump where they're taking all the debris to be  
5 sifted through, was running out of some supplies, and  
6 this, that and the other.

7           We went on a low level face to face with  
8 people who were actually in the trenches that need this  
9 stuff and we were able to get it done within one hour,  
10 where if we waited to go through EOC and Troop Command  
11 and the Aviation Brigade and everybody else who is in  
12 here, who really has no experience with dealing with  
13 these agencies, we would have waited six or eight  
14 hours, if they even let us do the mission.

15           So there's a lot of political mumbo jumbo  
16 going on. They bring brigades in here, like I said,  
17 that really don't have a good feel for what we can do  
18 in these type of situations.

19           I'm not saying we don't need a command and  
20 control structure, by no means. What we do need is a  
21 command and control structure that knows the workers in

1 the city, that can pick up phones and call various  
2 people, and the National Guard is -- all the units in  
3 New York City and the units from upstate would be much  
4 more useful and will be much more productive.

5           And that's probably one of the biggest morale  
6 factors. We bring troops on site and we're told, well,  
7 the Mayor's office says you can't do this, and the EOC  
8 says you can't do that.

9           So what we do is we wind up on low level  
10 weasel deals and we get our own missions and we  
11 generate them and we go out and do them.

12           On the positive side, I think the reactions of  
13 the soldiers, and I can only speak for the downstate  
14 guys and maybe Rockland and some of the other places  
15 where we've gone to do disaster type of stuff, the  
16 attitude and the morale and the can-do part of the  
17 National Guard soldiers located in the City of New York  
18 is exemplary.

19           My people, we wound up with almost 400 people  
20 on the ground by, I believe it was around 10:00 o'clock  
21 on Wednesday, whether they were at the armory or on

1 site over here, and that was within a 12 hour call up.

2 Of course, this is an extraordinary type of  
3 thing where everybody saw it on the news. They said  
4 the Guard is being called up. Everybody wanted to  
5 help, so everybody came running.

6 But even on the low level snow storm and  
7 disaster type things, we always get a good response.  
8 We get a lot of support from the community when we go  
9 do these missions.

10 But like I said before, the most frustrating  
11 thing is to be on ground here with all our equipment,  
12 ready to go, and we are told, well, we have to wait for  
13 Troop Command to make a decision, EOC, and this, that  
14 and the other.

15 So after many years of experience of doing  
16 these type of things, we know how to do the weasel  
17 deals, where a sergeant with the police department  
18 that's a National Guard soldier will go over to the  
19 command post and say, listen, what do you guys need,  
20 and they'll say, okay, we can use XYZ here, there, and  
21 we generate our own missions and really bypass all the

1   bureaucratic stuff that goes on in these types of  
2   things.

3                   And I also think they need to come up with a  
4   contingency plan for these types of disasters,  
5   especially -- you know, it may not be necessarily New  
6   York City, because of the assets of the fire and police  
7   departments, because of the size of them, but the  
8   smaller city, i.e., like Newark, New Jersey or some of  
9   the neighboring cities that don't have the civil  
10  assets, we may be asked to do a lot more.

11                   I think a plan really needs to be put in place  
12  and I think you need people who are familiar with the  
13  area to be in command of these types of things not 400  
14  miles away and not have really a clue of what's going  
15  on.

16                   **MAJ MELNYK:** Do you want to address issues  
17  like force protection here or the --

18                   **1SG RANAURO:** One of the things we ran into  
19  during the first one or two days, myself and one of my  
20  other soldiers, we had moved down to the ferry terminal  
21  down here. I think it was Thursday and it was really

1 raining very bad and the marina and Aviation was nice  
2 enough to not only give us ferries to bring our  
3 equipment back and forth, but let us use the terminal  
4 up there to keep our soldiers dry and run a TOC out of.

5 I was just coming out of the building and one  
6 of my soldiers, an E-6, Doug Marcarcione (phonetic,)   
7 was also a police officer, was with the police detail  
8 down there and they had a description of some people  
9 running around that were terrorists, and this, that and  
10 the other, and we wound up chasing two people that  
11 turned out to have video films of all the disaster and  
12 all the response, I think it was \$85,000 in cash, and  
13 both bore passports from the Mideast.

14 We didn't actually catch them. We kind of  
15 went around the building, around the water, and forced  
16 them into the police department's hands.

17 We are not allowed -- even the police officers  
18 and law enforcement people were in a serious threat  
19 posture down here.

20 We are not allowed to have any weapons or  
21 anything like that to even protect ourselves if



1 something happened. And they have us working check  
2 points, working traffic control, you know, interfacing  
3 with motorists and this, that and the other, and it's  
4 not really a good thing to have.

5           And I'm not -- don't get me wrong. I'm not  
6 saying every soldier should have a weapon out here, but  
7 mostly people in law enforcement and carrying them day  
8 in and day out, there should be some kind of provision  
9 to either be a nine mil -- I'm not talking about  
10 bringing tanks and 50 cal machine guns up here, but  
11 there should be something for self-protection for the  
12 soldiers that are working these various details.

13           And like I said, we're unique, because a lot  
14 of our people are law enforcement. So I know most of  
15 the guys and I'll probably get busted for this, but  
16 most of our guys are carrying their personal weapons  
17 anyway, just for our own safety.

18           So that needs to be looked at a little bit,  
19 especially if we're going to be doing these types of  
20 check points and this, that and the other.

21           And it's also a little bit of a show of force

1 and I don't think the civilian population would have a  
2 problem with that under these circumstances right here.

3 And, again, it goes back to each  
4 circumstances, what you -- what would be called for.

5 **MAJ MELNYK:** Do you want to address the  
6 civilian population? How have they been?

7 **1SG RANAURO:** I think as a whole, from  
8 everything we have seen, being staged, having our  
9 armory on Staten Island, naturally, there was a --  
10 today we received, I guess, maybe about 200 posters  
11 from the kids on Staten Island, thanking us, and this,  
12 that and the other, and actually from all over the  
13 state.

14 The support from our people on Staten Island  
15 is great, as always. We have received countless  
16 donations of donuts and cakes and food, this, that and  
17 the other, to support the men while they're doing the  
18 mission, and the same thing in Manhattan.

19 The usual liberal population of Manhattan, who  
20 would be aghast at seeing a soldier in uniform on the  
21 street in lower Manhattan, has come over to us and say

1 we'd like to thank you, your support and your presence  
2 here makes us feel safer, send you here, send you  
3 there, food.

4           So I think the people in Manhattan have taken  
5 to us, especially when they hear that most of the units  
6 down here are stationed within New York City itself.

7           **MAJ MELNYK:** Are there any last things you  
8 want to add?

9           **1SG RANAURO:** No. I think that --

10          **MAJ MELNYK:** You'll be glad to get home.

11          **1SG RANAURO:** Yeah. I'll be glad to get home.

12          And I just want to pay tribute to my soldiers, that  
13 they've done a great job under the circumstances. They  
14 have responded very quickly.

15                 They did a lot of work under harsh conditions,  
16 where you're dealing with dust.

17                 And I forgot to mention one other thing.  
18 There's many unstable buildings up there and our  
19 soldiers were up there, and I'm not in the greatest of  
20 shape, but I ran from the World Trade Center to the  
21 East River when there was a threat of a couple other

1 buildings collapsing, and our soldiers working in the  
2 lobbies of those buildings and working in the morgue.

3           So they ran a couple of times. Each time the  
4 alarms went off that a building looked like it was  
5 going to come down, and they were working under those  
6 conditions and dealing with, you know, body parts.

7           (End tape.)

8           (The interview was concluded.)

9                           \* \* \* \* \*