
A Tale of Two Cities



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September 11, 2001 is one of those dates in the history of the United States that will be forever etched in the minds of all its citizens. More than three thousand people perished at the World Trade Center in New York City, at the Pentagon in Virginia and aboard United Airlines Flight 93 when it crashed in Pennsylvania. More people died as a result of the terrorist attacks that day than were killed at Pearl Harbor, Hawaii in December of 1941.

In the wake of this tragedy, the American people have experienced feelings of loss, grief, anxiety and vulnerability to a degree that they never before could have imagined. Prior to September 11th, Americans took comfort from the fact that geography seemed to be “on our side.” The United States was protected by two great oceans that served as a buffer, insulating us from European, Asian and Middle East wars, acts of terrorism and other armed conflicts. Although the law enforcement community was well aware of the potential for acts of violence on American soil by international terrorist organizations, the American public seemed not to be and was, therefore, understandably shaken by the events of September 11th. The very necessary and prudent policy of the United States



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manifestations of this new spirit in the many displays of the “Stars and Stripes” of the United States, in the memorial services held throughout the country for the victims of September 11th and in the huge monetary donations made to the various funds established to aid the victims and their families.

Rather than aid in the destruction of the United States and the American people, those responsible for these terrorist acts have actually served to strengthen the faith of the American people in their government, in their way of life and in themselves.

In that same spirit of unity, the response on the part of all segments of government in the United States—federal, state and local—to the efforts to recover victims and to aid in the investigation of these terrorist acts has been nothing less than phenomenal. The way in which all our governmental entities have come together to contribute their individual areas of expertise to the larger goal of identifying, prosecuting, locating and apprehending all those individuals who either participated in the conspiracy to plan and carry out the terrorist acts of September 11th or those who may be planning future attacks should reinforce the American public’s faith in its government and should, at the same time, send a strong signal to our enemies.

A major portion of the investigation is being conducted in New York City. The greatest loss of life in the attacks occurred when the twin towers of the World Trade Center were attacked and collapsed. The largest of the three crime scenes of September 11th is located in lower Manhattan. In addition, our New York FBI office has the most experienced investigators with regard to Osama Bin Laden and his al Qaeda organization.

The New York FBI office and the New York City Police Department have a long tradition of cooperative

Department of Justice to issue terrorist alerts to the public as intelligence information was received and analyzed in the months following the attacks and the prosecution of the war on terrorism by our military forces abroad have contributed to the public’s sense of unease.

The attacks of September 11th, however, have also rekindled a renewed sense of unity and patriotism in the United States. We see

efforts covering a range of investigative areas from terrorism to organized crime to drugs to violent crime. Almost twenty-two years ago, both agencies formed the Joint Terrorism Task Force (JTTF), which soon became a model for similar task forces in other cities across the nation. This unit successfully investigated the first attack on the World Trade Center; the conspiracy to detonate bombs in the Lincoln and Holland Tunnels and at the United Nations Building; the plot by Ramzi Yousef to detonate bombs simultaneously aboard eleven United States commercial airliners as they transited the Pacific Ocean; the bombings of the United States Embassies in East Africa; and the bombing of the U.S.S. Cole. In the years since its formation, the JTTF has expanded to include approximately fifteen other federal, state and local law enforcement agencies.

When the two airliners flew into the World Trade Center and it was clear that New York City was the victim of a horrific terrorist attack, the JTTF mobilized, as did the entire New York FBI office—the FBI’s largest—comprising 1,100 Special Agents. The New York investigation was coordinated from a makeshift command post that had been quickly established in an FBI parking garage due to the fact that all telephone service had been disrupted in lower Manhattan where both the World Trade Center and the federal building housing the FBI office were located.

A truly massive investigation was underway.

From the very beginning, the investigation benefited from the assistance provided by the federal government’s Inspector General community. The offices of the Inspectors General offered to the FBI the expertise and professionalism of their investigators and the FBI readily accepted that offer.

Working in concert with the FBI, New York City Police Department, Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms, United States Immigration and Naturalization Service, Internal Revenue Service, United States Postal Inspection Service and others, investigators from the offices of approximately seventeen Inspectors General participated in the investigation by processing and clearing in excess of 5,000 leads. Working twelve-hour shifts, seven days a week, the personnel assigned to the investigation from the Inspectors General offices conducted interviews, checked records and performed many other tasks critical to the investigation.

One of the major issues facing the FBI, the New York City Police Department and the United States Attorney’s Office

These OIG investigators were respected colleagues whose professionalism and enthusiasm contributed greatly to getting the job done

from the beginning of the investigation was how to conduct a crime scene investigation when the crime scene was so vast. Typically, following the commission of a crime, FBI Evidence Response Teams and forensics experts closely analyze the scene looking for evidence of the crime which can later be used in court. In this instance, the instrumentality of the crime was already known—the two airliners filled with jet fuel. The intense heat of the fires that resulted from the attacks almost certainly destroyed most, if not all, of the pertinent evidence and, of course, the perpetrators of the crime were dead.

The decision was made, in concurrence with FBI Headquarters and the Justice Department, that due to the aforementioned circumstances, and because there continued to be a vigorous rescue and recovery effort underway in the mountains of rubble, there should be a modified crime scene investigation undertaken. Debris from the World Trade Center was loaded onto trucks and transported to a landfill on Staten Island where teams of investigators literally raked and sifted through each pile of rubble as it was unloaded. The purpose of this effort was, and continues to be, to look for certain specific categories of items such as

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human remains, the black boxes from both airliners, documents and personal effects. Thousands of tons of debris have been sifted and this process will continue well into 2002.

Investigators from the offices of the Inspectors General participated in this crime scene search at the Staten Island landfill. These investigators worked with the FBI Special Agents and the New York City Police Department Detectives assigned to this task.

Throughout the entire period in which the FBI had the benefit of the assistance provided by the staffs of the Inspectors General, these investigators were respected colleagues whose professionalism and enthusiasm contributed greatly to

getting the job done.

For them, no assignment was too small, nor any obstacle too high.

The contribution made to this investigation by all the investigators of the Offices of Inspectors General is a shining example of the cooperative spirit and the cohesiveness of the United States government. Our partnership is recognition of the fact that this is one government, working together in the war on terrorism. 🏛️

JAMES TROST

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On September 11, 2001, at 9:39 a.m., our lives changed forever. Hijacked American Airlines flight number 77, which left Dulles Airport an hour before, attacked the Pentagon. Though many witnessed the incoming plane, all were helpless to stop it.

After the attack, we reacted . . . in force.

These attacks necessitated the immediate response by Federal law enforcement agencies, including those of the Offices of Inspectors General (OIG); not as individual agencies discussing jurisdictional issues, but as one unified force to help, rake, dig, recover, or do whatever was needed. The Pentagon and the Twin Towers in New York had been attacked. Now, amongst the carnage and destruction, computer programmers, firefighters, auditors, investigators, special agents and directors, all rallied to assist.

The Federal Bureau of Investigation's (FBI) Joint Operations Center went operational and coordinated

efforts with the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA). The first priority was to rescue all personnel and extinguish the fires. The second priority was to establish a crime scene and collect the evidence to identify those who were responsible. The third and succeeding priorities were to coordinate recovery efforts and ensure the operational ability of the Pentagon offices.

The rescue search, comparable to that of the World Trade Center only on a smaller scale, had been confined in the catacombs and hallways of the section of the Pentagon that collapsed. While some searched, firefighters tried to contain the ever persistent fires from growing or spreading along the roofline of the different structural rings. Once the fires had been extinguished, agents assisted with the search for survivors, evidence collection, and crime scene documentation. These simple terms do not illustrate the laborious efforts that were put forth by those who assisted.





The Rescue

Within minutes of the attack, rescuers were faced with the destruction that many never dreamed about. The physical destruction, combined with horrendous fires prevented many heroic efforts. As various firefighting efforts continued, no one knew

exactly how many people were located in the temporary workspaces.

In the Pentagon's central courtyard, a casualty collection point was set up; however, since it was only minutes after the attack, many rescue teams had not been able to get to the victims. Rescuers decided to try to get as many people out as possible. Emergency services converged on the courtyard and an emergency medical triage went into operation. The most severely burned victims were immediately transported to local hospitals. Other victims, with minor or moderate injuries, were treated and later transported to other hospitals or released.

A temporary morgue was initiated, and the gruesome task of identifying the victims was initiated. To confirm the victim's identities, family members were contacted over the next few weeks to help provide any items for possible DNA matching, to confirm the victim's identities.

Evidence Recovery

When the rescue operation changed to a recovery operation, the OIGs and other law enforcement agencies responded in force. Some agents instinctively showed up, others made a coordinated, scheduled response with their respective agencies. All were there to ensure that the second phase, evidence collection, was done by the book. Due to the possibility of various harmful airborne particulates, it was decided early on that all rescuers would wear containment level clothing and air purifying respirators. FEMA supplied the protective materials, the Environmental Protection Agency and the FBI supplied the decontamination equipment.

On site coordinators soon decided to have one team dig through the rubble and pull large quantities of debris from the crash site. If any evidence was found, it would be photographed in place and recovered. Even if no evidence was found, all the debris was to be placed in large bins and

transported to the Pentagon's north side parking lot for further examination. Here, the material was placed in large piles, later to be smoothed out, flattened and readied for examination.

Local rescue canines went over the piles, with the intent of identifying any human remains. Up to 300 agents lined up and raked each flattened pile one inch at a time, trying to identify any possible evidence. Some of the items found included aircraft parts, clothing, furniture, Pentagon documents, human remains and scores of other personal effects and pieces of the Pentagon. Evidence technicians photographed and seized any evidence recovered from these rubble piles.

Support Systems

Not only did a large number of agents from the various OIGs participate in the evidence recovery, others provided untold stories of support to those who dug through the debris. These agents, investigative specialists and support staff worked in conjunction with the agents who dug through the debris. They assisted their coworkers by providing peer support, ensuring the containment suits were properly sealed and taped, handing out wet, ice soaked towels and coordinating work schedules. The support infrastructure, possibly perceived as transparent, ensured a smooth operation under the most adverse conditions.

The Weather

The weather played havoc in the most extreme of circumstances. The agents working at the Pentagon endured temperatures into the low 30's to high 80's. Over the next two months, storms, rain and a tornado (which tore down most of the tents) struck the Pentagon reserve property.

The Participating Agencies


Our gratitude goes to the agents of the following OIGs and agencies for their dedication, hard work and perseverance



in the rescue and recovery efforts following the Pentagon attack:

Agency for International Development
Department of Agriculture
Department of Commerce
Department of Defense
 a. Defense Criminal Investigative Service
 b. Naval Criminal Investigative Service
 c. Air Force Office of Special Investigations
 d. U.S. Army Criminal Investigation Command
 e. Office of Naval Intelligence
Department of Education
Department of Energy
Environmental Protection Agency
Equal Employment Opportunity Commission
Farm Credit Administration
Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation
General Services Administration
Health and Human Services
Housing and Urban Development
Department of the Interior
Department of Justice
Department of Labor
National Aeronautics and Space Administration
National Science Foundation
U.S. Postal Service



Social Security Administration
Department of Transportation
Department of State
Department of the Treasury
Treasury Inspector General for Tax Administration
Department of Veteran's Affairs
Internal Revenue Service, Criminal Investigations Division
Bureau of Alcohol Tobacco and Firearms
U.S. Marshals Service
Environmental Protection Agency, Criminal Investigations Division
Federal Bureau of Investigation 

RUTH RITZEMA

*Special Agent in Charge, New York/New Jersey District Office, Office of Inspector General,
U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development*

The largest office of the NY/NJ District, Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), Office of Inspector General (OIG) was located on the 6th floor of 6 World Trade Center (WTC). I am the Special Agent in Charge (SAC) of the Office of Investigation for the NY/NJ region. When I first heard of this location for our office, I remember thinking that it would be nice to have offices in such a financial and business capital, and people seemed somewhat impressed when I mentioned it. Of course, I usually didn't dwell on the fact that 6 WTC was a GSA leased building, one of the four shorter (8 floors) buildings surrounding the twin towers that people associated with the WTC. Now, of course, people have a much different reaction to my disclosure of our office's previous location.

I am going to try to recount to you some of the experiences that our organization went through on that terrible day and since then. The morning of September 11th started out like many others for the Office of Investigation. As you

could see from the television, it was a beautiful warm day, not a cloud in the sky. The weather was perfect.

Our offices located at 6 WTC housed approximately thirty-five employees, comprised of Special Agents, auditors and support staff of the District. On that morning our agents were not in the office as they had a scheduled quarterly firearms qualifications. Our auditors and support staff were hard at work in 6 WTC when the first plane hit 1 WTC, the North Tower, which was adjacent to our office.

All of the auditors and support staff in the building heard the explosion, and one of our secretaries who saw pieces of the plane and building fall, immediately told everyone to evacuate prior to any alarms going off. They did so, going across the street near the financial district, where they watched the building burn. The group became separated when the second plane went into Tower 2, the South Tower. For most of them a bizarre commute of walk-

ing endless miles and being unable to reach anyone by telephone amidst a city going crazy ensued.

There were a number of amazing quirks of fate regarding that day, which I believe probably saved the lives of agents who may have been first responders had they been there (we have a number of trained EMTs on our staff). First, there was the qualification, which only occurs four times a year. Second, one of our ASACs had planned on going to Home Depot the evening of September 10th to pick up supplies for the firearms training. He decided to postpone that trip and to stay at the office very late to read a long term paper that an intern (later promoted to SA) had given him a few weeks before. When the first plane hit the next morning instead of being in the office, the ASAC was in Home Depot getting supplies for the firearms training. Coincidentally, the topic of the term paper was terrorism and discussed Osama bin Laden.

Further, our four agents from the Buffalo, NY office had flown in for the qualification and were to meet their ASAC at the WTC office at 9:00 am for case reviews. Once again we were lucky as the ASAC was held up in traffic on Staten Island, and was sitting at the Holland Tunnel when the first plane hit Tower 1 of the WTC. The Buffalo agents who had stayed at a hotel in Brooklyn came over to the WTC via the subway. They made a mistake getting off the subway, and exited at city hall instead of the exit that would have put them in the basement of the WTC complex. When they got to the street the plane had already hit, and the city was in a panic.

I had meetings scheduled for that day and was in NJ when I received a page from an agent about a fire at WTC. When I heard about the second plane going in, I immediately headed into the city using the shoulder of the NJ Turnpike because traffic had stopped. People were just sitting in their cars, watching the towers burn and listening to the radio. I tried calling the office and got a busy signal. I was able to reach my one ASAC, who to my surprise, reported that he was leaving Home Depot (he is ALWAYS in the office at that hour), and that he would work on locating our people. That was the last phone call I could make. As I approached the turnpike extension, I could see the towers on fire. I repeatedly tried to get through to headquarters, or to the agents on the nextels or the offices, but as hard as I pushed I only got a busy signal. As I was driving towards the city, Tower 2 collapsed before my eyes and I heard on the radio that the Pentagon had also been attacked.

I drove through the Holland tunnel to 26 Federal Plaza, six blocks away from the WTC. I ran to the federal building where an FBI agent told me the command post was at the church adjacent to the WTC complex. Running down

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Broadway in a suit, I was struck by how surreal the whole situation was. The beautiful day had turned to what seemed like nuclear winter, all dark with soot and smoke in the air. It seemed like thousands of people were running and screaming, some of them burnt and bleeding. Some people tried to grab me and turn me around until I threw on my "Federal Agent" vest cover that I had grabbed. I tried to get help for a couple of people who had pretty serious burns, and continued to run to the command post so that I could make sure that our people were out safe. I got to the church where I was looking for the command post

when Tower 1 collapsed. I have no memory of much of that, only that I ended up with the fireman who were screaming to each other on their radios that they were getting buried and giving coordinates: "We're at two o'clock from the fountain" (the fountain was located in the middle of the WTC plaza). A makeshift first aid station had been set up and many of the emergency response people were there. After the air cleared some, another FBI agent saw me and told me that we were rallying in Chinatown.

We ran to Chinatown in a city gone mad. You have heard about the fog of war—well the rumors and false reports were everywhere. We were being told that there were terrorists dressed up as fireman who had bombs strapped on, that the White House and Capitol had been attacked, and as we rallied in the park in Chinatown (a hundred agents or so) we were told to get our jackets off, and disperse because of a sniper. We regrouped in a location known to all of us, an automobile garage that most agencies use to get lights and sirens put in. This would end up being the central command post for all of law enforcement due to the fact that all of Southern Manhattan (where NYPD's Headquarters (HQ), FBI, and HIDTA's Intelligence Center were located) had no electricity or phones. I immediately agreed to work with the FBI in whatever capacity made sense, and they would assist us in trying to locate our people. To say we were all shell-shocked would be an understatement, but everyone was working. Our ASACs had rallied up our agents, and were standing by. We continued to try to locate our people. We were trying to communicate with HQ, which was also trying to get organized. It took us about eight hours to account for everyone. In that sense our office was incredibly lucky, though you couldn't help but feel guilty working side by side with people who were still missing family and friends. We were all in this together.

HQ was amazing, trying to respond to whatever we needed. At about 4:00 PM one of the ASACs and I went back to what was formerly our office, now known as Ground Zero, and watched everything burn. Shortly after 7 WTC collapsed. We had our people, but we had lost everything else. In the meantime our EMTs did what they

could. We were given space by DEA to use “for as long as we needed it” and we continued to coordinate with the command post. We also had every agent in the country it seemed, willing to come in to help and our Boston SAC and some of his agents were on their way.

6 WTC was a GSA building that also housed ATF, Customs, a small (HUD) office OMAR, TIGTA, as well as many other agencies. 7 WTC housed US Secret Service and the CIA. It was about 2:00 AM at the 1st Command Post located at 290 Broadway and I was sitting with the other SACs. As I saw it, the first priority was continued security, second to find survivors, and then to find out who did this. There was complete chaos, rumors, speculation, very limited communication, but we were working as hard as we could. It seemed that every law-enforcement related agency I could think of was in that room with a phone that rarely worked, and a handwritten piece of paper taped in front of their table to identify them. There were many difficult stories, and much time was spent on trying to get information on missing people that were close to us . . . over and over it was the same thing, “we haven’t heard from him, he hasn’t called his wife yet”, and people shaking their heads saying “that’s not good, we’ll see what we can find out” . . . the information was never good.

The next few weeks were about turning chaos into an organized investigation, while dealing with the many difficult personal issues. Our AIGI and DAIGI were thinking of everything that we could need. They were getting us manpower, equipment (even the weird stuff we needed like masks and protective suits), computers, psychological assistance, administrative assistance (who made sure we got paid after losing all of our files), and a 24-hour HQ command post that could respond to anything we needed. Acting Inspector General David C. Williams and Secretary of HUD Mel Martinez were completely supportive, speaking to me personally and coming out to assess the situation. The first month we worked 12 hours on 12 hours off (yeah right, as you can guess we were lucky to get any sleep). We worked out of the retired aircraft carrier the Intrepid running terrorist leads for what is known as the Penttbomb Investigation (Pen for Pennsylvania, Pent for pentagon, and tt for the twin towers) while learning the whole FBI system intimately.



Our auditors and administrative staff did whatever they could to support the law enforcement mission and at the same time started to rebuild the district into a functioning office. We lost most of our equipment, all of our administrative files, and the office that housed most of our staff. The auditors and administrative staff under the Housing Fraud Initiative, Assistant District Inspector General for Audit, set up a temporary location in Newark where the NY/NJ District Inspector General for Audit temporarily relocated his staff. They rebuilt cases, looked for space options, coordinated with HUD, and generally supported the agents and each other in many ways, not the least being emotionally.

Law enforcement continued to organize. The PCIE met with the FBI Assistant Director to develop a plan to provide IG resources (that in some cases, had already been working on the Intrepid) in a coordinated fashion, allowing for pooling of resources, as the local IG offices were really stretched thin. It evolved into two shifts, morning and evening, supervised by HUD-OIG and TIGTA respectively, whose assignments were dictated by the needs of the FBI, specifically the JTTF case squad. The work was phenomenal and the IG special agents from about a dozen offices jumped into incredibly dangerous leads that seemed like material for a movie. These special agents were running down leads such as can you deliver anthrax spores in a child’s remote control plane, some learned about suitcase nuclear bombs, and all of us learned how to respond to a

potential anthrax lead. The IG agents conducted arrests, search warrants, interviews, and served subpoenas, sometimes on their own, sometimes with another agent from various agencies (DEA, Customs, ATF, you name it). And then, there was the paperwork, and all of the IG agents got very good at writing up 302s.

The hundreds of agents staging out of the Intrepid were moved to the garage location for about a month, and subsequently moved back into 26 Federal Plaza after electricity and phones were restored. The IG agents were staged all over the city, the command post, airports, ground zero and whatever hot spot came up. They also searched for evidence at the landfill in Staten Island, where they would take a truck load of debris from ground zero, dump it in a thin

long pile, and the agent would choose his tool, a rake or a shovel, to find evidence of the crime, evidence of someone's identity (ring, wallet, etc), or all too often, part of someone who didn't get out. It was tedious, unorganized, confusing, and difficult. It was amazing how hard everyone worked, agents from totally different backgrounds, and did whatever they were tasked (including incredibly depressing, difficult or often, just simply mundane work) with professionalism and enthusiasm.

After about a month more, the FBI downscaled their efforts and we dissolved the IG coalition. We, as well as most in Lower Manhattan, are trying to get back to normal.

There have been too many funerals (FBI Agent Lenny Hatton who ran into the WTC to help as well as former FBI SAC John O'Neil, who had retired a number of weeks before as the agency's terrorism SAC to head up the Port Authority Security, to name a very few). We have to build an office. We have to rebuild our old cases, all of our administrative infrastructure, and continue with the ongoing investigative work that keeps coming. What we don't have to rebuild is our spirit to continue the good fight even in these difficult times, as all we have to do is look at the gaping hole down the street and remember what is really important. 🏠

MICHAEL A. DELGADO

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Department of Treasury*

In August 2001 I had just arrived in New York City, newly promoted to the position of Special Agent in Charge of TIGTA's New York Field Division. I had previously served as the SAC of the Boston Field Division and I accepted the New York job, because I saw it as the crown jewel of the TIGTA field slots. For me it was an opportunity to run the office in the most exciting city on the world. It was the job I had dreamed about and I was excited to tell people I would be working in the World Trade Center. The criminal work was the best in the business and the environment was electric.

September 11, 2001 was a beautiful sun-filled day and the sight of the city from the New Jersey Turnpike was truly impressive. Traffic into the Holland Tunnel had been heavy and gave me some time to absorb how huge and dominating the WTC Towers were. I arrived at about 0825 hours and sat at my computer in my office, on the 3rd floor of building 6 WTC. I had arrived a little later than usual and I was ready to catch up on the business of the day. As I browsed through my e-mail messages and other business I glanced out the window, across the West Side Highway, and took note of the people walking across the street into the WTC. The true melting pot of the world, with people from all walks of life. I imagined they were hustling in to work, ready to commence with another high paced day. I stopped working for a bit and just watched the street, the traffic, the people, the water and thought it was probably time for me to go down and mingle with the masses and get a quick cup of coffee. I decided to handle one more e-mail message and then I would make a break for it. I started banging on the keyboard when I heard a roaring jet engine and a huge bang that shook the building . . . and all of a sudden my life and my dream job changed forever.

Initially, I thought a jet had buzzed the towers and caused some type of sonic boom. At the same time, I noticed the people standing on West Side Highway had suddenly started looking strange. Their body language was all wrong, some were pointing at the tower, some were running away from the towers in a panic and others were standing still as if they could not move. I tried to look out my window to see if the boom had caused any damage to the tower, but 6 WTC was right next to the North Tower and I couldn't see from that angle. I then noticed that debris was floating down, almost like a ticker tape parade. At that moment, I sensed something was very wrong, and then I saw that pieces of paper and insulation were floating down and I felt a knot in my gut. I walked out of my office and asked my secretary what had happened. She was white with fear, her eyes were wide open and wet . . . she said she didn't know and at that time I felt I needed to make a decision. I told her to clear the office . . . get everyone out now . . . I noticed that no alarms had sounded, but my gut was getting tighter . . . my palms were getting wet and I knew something big, something deadly was underway. I went back into my office and attempted to call my supervisor in Headquarters . . . no answer, I tried to reach two other Senior Executives in Headquarters . . . no answer, just voice mail. I decided not to leave messages and I would contact them later when I knew more. It was time to get out and I checked to see if any of my staff were still in the office. My yells were met with no response so I worked my way out to the main entry level of the building. The lobby area was a mass of panic and confusion. The security guard told me a plane had hit the building. The thought that a plane could accidentally hit the building was more strange than scary, with the emphasis on accident. Security had directed us through the walkway across West Side High-

way, through the American Express Building and outside onto the terrace. There were several hundred people crowded onto the terrace and I waded through the crowd looking for members of my staff.

I was new here and had no idea where they were or what plan had been previously put in place. I tried to use my cell phone to find my staff, but I could get no service. Suddenly, men and women of all races and all occupations were huddled together looking at the North Tower as smoke spewed from the building. Many were also saying a jet had hit the building and as I looked and listened for some confirmation on the situation, I noticed that big pieces of debris were falling from the Tower. Initially, I looked away to search for my staff, but when I looked closer at the debris, I suddenly realized the debris was actually people falling from the Tower. I thought surely my eyes were playing tricks on me, but after thirty or more bodies dropped from the building, I realized this was real and a lot of people were going to die today.

I watched more people fall from the Tower and I turned away to talk to an IRS CID supervisor, whom I had met just one week earlier. His eyes widened and he gasped as the South Tower was then struck by another jet. I turned and saw the flame and smoke billowing from the South Tower and came to the fearful reality that we were under attack. This was no accident . . . someone was trying to kill us. Men and women were hugging each other and crying and more people were now falling out of the South Tower as well. The level of terror was uncontrollable and contagious. I also realized that WTC was now a crime scene and a command center would surely be assembled very quickly. I thought my staff would probably be located at that command center, too. Security personnel began to direct people away from the terrace and I began to help them clear the area.

I noticed a woman with a gun and an FBI badge on her belt. I identified myself to her and asked her if she knew where the command center would be set up. She agreed that a command center would be set up, but she had no idea where, and like mine, her cell phone was not getting service. We both agreed to see if we could find the command center. We asked NYPD and PAPD officers to direct us to the site. The directions were unclear and we spent several minutes going in circles, going in the opposite direction of people who were leaving the area. We kept looking for the command center and catching glances of the burning Towers. It never dawned on me that we were dancing with death. I knew the Towers were damaged, but they still stood tall and I envisioned that the NYFD would get up there, control the fires and within a year the repairs would be complete and we would be back to business. We found ourselves across the street from the South Tower, when she said she thought we were probably too close to the building. I looked at the Towers and the smoke seemed so far up from us that I wondered how anyone could get up there and then fight the fire. Yet, I never felt the Towers were in any

structural danger . . . danger of actually coming down. I agreed with her and said, "Let's get out of here." And all of a sudden, the top of the South Tower began to rumble and seemed to mushroom as the building began to come apart . . . falling right towards us, a hundred stories separating us from death.

We ran along the side of a building, with nowhere to go. Instinct took over as we jumped over a railing, not knowing what was below. We landed on two firefighters and lost our balance as we tried to gain our footing on the downward slant of what I now know was a parking garage entrance. I lifted her up and we ran down the ramp into the garage as the building rained down upon us. The ground rumbled as we hit the mouth of the garage and suddenly the sunshine was gone and the air was filled with smoke, dust

The ground rumbled as we hit the mouth of the garage and suddenly the sunshine was gone and the air was filled with smoke, dust and debris. Day had turned to night as we were swept with the debris into the garage.

and debris. Day had turned to night as we were swept with the debris into the garage. I jumped into a small attendant office, just inside the mouth of the garage and found two firefighters had already taken refuge there. The FBI agent was swept into the garage and I lost her.

We tried to close the door, but the doorway was obstructed with

debris and now the office was filled with smoke and dust. I tried to breathe through my tie and my lungs began to burn . . . I was scared and my eyes began to burn and tear. My tie was not cleaning the air . . . or if it was . . . I was not getting enough to survive with this plan. I was suffocating and to make it worse I could not see. I started to curse myself for letting myself get close enough to these buildings to get myself killed. I was scared of dying and I told myself not to panic...not to lose focus . . . not to die in a parking garage. I wanted to live and I looked for options. My training told me to get low and maybe find some air near the floor. One of the firefighters began to panic and she cried that she did not want to die, not her, not today. The other firefighter told her to hold it together and like a soldier in battle, she got back on top of her panic. I went to the floor, having made a vow not to die today and still looking for options.

I began to tear the lining of my jacket . . . to use as a mask, when I felt a draft. Without thinking I thrust my face forward and my lungs came alive as the sweet oxygen made its way through my body. I had found a vent from an air conditioning unit, that in normal circumstances would

go unnoticed. I yelled that I had found air and the three of us placed our heads side by side as we sucked in the gift and wondered what to do next. One of the firefighters said, "We're ok now, let's wait until they come get us." I said, "No, we don't know how long this air will last or if the rest of the building might come down. Let's get recharged and then see if we can get out of here." They agreed and a few minutes later we took our last gasps of fresh air and ventured out of the office. Without anything being said we went in the direction of the entrance, walking over and around fallen debris and never saw each other again. I tried to open my eyes, but the burning was tremendous and I just relented that I needed to continue going forward, still living on the last gasp of air I had taken in the office . . . determined not to stop . . . determined to live.

I continued going forward, until I thought I had found the street, but I was only guessing as I could not see. My feet trudged through paper, insulation and other parts of the building. I peeked to get some sense of direction. I know now that some of the bulges in the debris must certainly have been bodies, but I could not help them now and surely no one could have survived this collapse. I didn't know if part or all of the Tower had collapsed. I dared to open my eyes and I found myself in a slowly falling storm of debris, floating down to earth, as evidence of large-scale death and destruction. I held my jacket close to my face and gasped for air and my body and brain pleading for air. I was tired, but determined not to stop . . . I was going to fight . . . I would not give in . . . if I stopped surely I would die. I pleaded with God to help me . . . I started to make deals with God to let me live and I would vow to do whatever he wanted. I wondered how many others were trying to make the same deal and maybe . . . maybe I had waited too late to ask. I kept going forward and the sun began to break through. I gasped for air and my plea was answered as I found air. I coughed and cried . . . from the burning dust and because I now knew I was going to have a chance at life.

In the distance I saw emergency personnel and civilians wandering away from the Tower, all covered with dust,

in a way that erased their age and race. A man rushed to me and gave me a paper breathing mask and a bottle of cold water. I walked a little farther and wondered if this brush with death had been a dream and when I dared to look back I saw that I was not dreaming and the North Tower was still standing and burning.

I quickly regained my energy and proceeded farther down West Side Highway, where I found a group of ATF agents. ATF agents were using the two-way radio in their cars to communicate with other agents and coordinate plans for a central meeting location for other Treasury Agencies. About 30 minutes later, the North Tower fell and we frantically proceeded farther away from the building, down West Side Highway, to Pier 40. Within the hour, agents from my division met me at Pier 40 and I was relieved to find that all members of my staff had escaped unharmed. For me personally, the fact that we did not find the command center saved our lives. The brave members from the NYPD, PAPD and NYFD who set up and began operating that command center perished when the Towers fell.

Within days, my staff began working with other federal, state and local agencies as part of the subsequent terrorist investigation. Four days later, I found that FBI agent at the FBI command post and learned she had survived, when firefighters broke down a door in the back of the parking garage and she exited the building through the main floor. I will leave it to others to provide the details of the investigative effort.

In short, I would like to commend my staff, TIGTA personnel from assisting Divisions and members of the Inspector General community for their tireless assistance in the investigative effort that followed the attack. I also want to commend the men and women of New York City for the manner in which they have bounced back from this tremendously evil event. I wake up each day, thankful to have survived . . . thankful to be alive. This is still and will continue to be my dream job. New York is still the greatest city in the world . . . we will never give the terrorists the satisfaction of making it anything less. 🏠

AMY MCDONALD

Special Agent, New York Field Investigations Office, Office of Inspector General, General Services Administration

It has been several months since September 11th, 2001, and we find ourselves looking back. Reflecting on where we were when we first heard the news of the attacks. Recognizing from the moment of the second plane's descent upon the South Tower the first plane's crash into the North Tower was not an accident; and realizing, in that instant, that our lives and sense of security were forever changed. Our emotions swell all over again as we

remember hearing that the Towers finally collapsed and how still, to this day, families hold out hope, not that their loved ones lost will be found alive, but that they will be found at all.

In news reports we have heard how the attacks have affected so many people in so many different ways. But only upon reflecting on how the attacks affected us personally can we begin to truly understand, and at the very least

empathize with others about how their lives have been changed since that week in September; and for some, everyday thereafter. And hopefully, through empathy and understanding we can try to help one another move forward in life. Never trying to forget, for that is a task impossible in our lifetime, and most probably (recalling the adage ‘history never forgets’), a task impossible for several lifetimes to come. More so, trying to find a way that we can use our memories to steer our lives in a positive direction, one that reflects the good we were deprived of when so many innocent people were prematurely taken from us and the basic human kindness we have since been exposed to, brought to the surface in response to the September 11th attacks.

This is an account of the GSA/OIG’s New York Field Investigations Office’s experiences since the September 11th attacks on America and the world. It is an attempt to do our part and share the surprisingly positive effect our post-attack experiences have had on us.

On the actual day of the attacks, we were not in our offices at the Federal Office Building, 26 Federal Plaza, located just 10 blocks north and two blocks east of what is now referred to as Ground Zero. We were at the Ft. Dix military installation in central New Jersey, preparing for the first of a two-day quarterly training session. We were waiting in a Burger King parking lot for the rest of our office to arrive when, at about 9:10 one agent asked if the local radio station morning show was known for playing sick jokes. Being from the area originally, I said yes. The other agent went on to explain that a woman just said a plane flew into the World Trade Center and she sounded like she was crying. Several minutes later another agent got a call from his wife telling him the same thing. That was how we first heard about the beginning of what happened on September 11, 2001.

Fortunate as we were to be out of the city on September 11th, though strange as it may sound, it was difficult being in central New Jersey when our friends, colleagues, and even family were in New York, experiencing the tragedy first hand. But hearing the roads, bridges, and tunnels were closed both in and out of Manhattan, it was decided we would stay and complete, as best we could, the training we

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were there for; and to return home on Wednesday when the situation, and our role in it, could be better assessed.

By lunchtime the attitude on the base had changed drastically. Roads we just had access to that morning were closed and everybody had to have proper documentation for their business on the base. The base had gone into an alert mode and for those of us who are not from a military background it was an awakening, driving home the reality of the situation. Before we finished for the day, we managed to get in touch with our audit counterparts who were in the Federal Plaza FOB when the attacks occurred, and to our relief, we were informed that everyone was okay (as much as they could be) and that the building itself was not physically damaged by the eventual collapse of the Towers. When evening came our emotions caught up with us as the night was wrought with phone calls and busy signals, trying to get in touch with family and friends to let them know we were fine . . . hoping friends and colleagues who worked in and around the WTC were among the fortunate to have escaped . . . trying to believe the unbelievable.

We began Wednesday in a daze, finding it hard to concentrate on what we were there for all the while knowing and in some ways dreading that we would soon see firsthand what the whole world had seen already. Soon September 11th would become real to us, and it was frightening. In deciding how best to handle our return to the city and the office, our managers, unfamiliar with the status of the Federal Plaza FOB or travel into lower Manhattan decided to make it up to us to find our way into the city on Thursday.

The logistics of traveling into the city on Thursday was not so difficult for us, with our law enforcement credentials and emergency vehicle equipment. The mental and emotional toll was exhausting—seeing the smoke rise from Ground Zero, smelling the sulfurous odor of the burning metal and plastic, and passing abandoned streets and vehicles laden with ash and debris. We could see that the roads south of Canal were deserted of all non-emergency traffic. There was an increased solemnity in the air as passage through each checkpoint left a marked absence beyond and a larger crowd of people behind, as access became more and more restricted. What you could see of the people’s mask and scarf-covered faces were expressions of bewilderment, expressions that were reflections if not of your own face, then undeniably of your soul.

Actual entrance into the Federal Plaza FOB was not much of a problem for us, as the building itself was not physically damaged by the attacks. However, it became increasingly clear that ability to work out of our offices was not likely. In its current state our office was not functional, there were no working phone lines, and the building’s ventilation system had been shut down leaving the existing air quality poor at best. And while there was emergency electricity, it was needed for emergency systems, not the everyday needs an office drains in electricity.

As has been the case in so many instances, others were quick to assist. GSA had set up a temporary command center out of 201 Varick Street, the closest Federal building north of Canal, and the GSA building management team was quick to offer us temporary space until 26 Federal Plaza returned to a more functional status.

But to simply pick up our casework where it was left off on September 10th, seemingly ages ago but really only three days prior, was under the circumstances, pointless to

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say the least. So under the unfamiliar territory of responding to and recovering from a terrorist attack, and with the rawness of the attacks still on our sleeves, we did what we could to try and help the city in general, ourselves more specifically.

With public transportation suspended to lower Manhattan and vehicular access only

granted to law enforcement and emergency vehicles, we assisted our audit counterparts in gaining access to the building. There is something to be said about resilience. The audit staff was in the building when the attacks occurred and still they returned only days after so that they could extract any files or equipment they might need to continue their work as best they could from various off-site locations.

When we heard that GSA was having problems gaining access to the lower part of Manhattan so that the agency's engineers could determine the stability of the 17 federal buildings in that area, GSA/OIG special agents escorted the necessary personnel beyond the police checkpoints and into the buildings needing surveillance.

And still, despite the effort, it all seemed in vain. It was impossible to focus on work and the job of 'getting back to normal' when people, friends and colleagues included, might be trapped between thousands of tons of rubble just blocks away. And so, with the support and often assistance of our managers, we went in search of a way to help.

Some of our agents went down to Ground Zero, like so many already there, desperate to help, willing to do anything. Some helped with the bucket line, carrying away debris from the collapsed buildings bucket by bucket. Some helped the volunteer workers pass out water and protective gear. When there was a scare of another building collapsing we helped each other to safety. When some found a sur-

vivor, we all celebrated; when a victim was carried away, we all mourned. But it was soon recognized that we all couldn't be at Ground Zero, and help was needed in other ways.

When the global investigation allowed, and initially demanded, local support, we became a participating agency in the FBI Joint Terrorism Task Force's (JTTF) 24-hour search for information about the attacks. Initially the GSA/OIG, being a relatively small OIG, incorporated with the larger DCIS/OIG, which was already a part of the JTTF, to work investigative leads jointly. Soon, when several agents from the SBA/OIG, another one of the smaller OIGs, offered their help, the GSA and SBA/OIG's began to take leads and pursue them together.

The initial days of the investigation were conducted out of the *Intrepid*, a retired US Navy aircraft carrier, now docked in the Hudson River. Countless federal, state and local agencies and departments put past differences aside, intermingled and worked extended shifts to respond to every lead. We were provided with desk space and telephones, computers and if necessary, a typing pool. Often times a snack table was replenished at the beginning of each shift, and several volunteer tents were setup where we, as well as any of the other support workers, could get almost anything we might need, from respiratory masks to protective gloves, from aspirin to Band-Aids, from something hot to eat to Halloween candy, whatever it was, they were just there to help us. This ever-present spirit of Americans' willingness to help others was also visible in the endless number of civilians who could be seen day and night, in any weather, standing on the median of the West Side Highway cheering and applauding as thousands of rescue workers were bused to Ground Zero each day. Showing their thanks and appreciation to all who were helping in response to the attacks, giving the encouragement so often needed to continue on the difficult task before us.

While the investigation was run and directed by the FBI, most of the supporting agencies and departments were given very specific responsibilities. Initially we were assigned to make contact with multiple storage facilities in the five NYC Boroughs and determine if any of the 19 suspected hijackers were known to the facility or if there were any clients at the facilities that were identified on a FBI watch list. In the event that a name or subject warranted further investigation we were given access to specialized databases maintained by various agencies to include INS, Customs, IRS, NYPD criminal history indices, NCIC, and the FBI. There was also legal counsel present in the event that we were uncertain of how to proceed with information we uncovered. We were allowed the freedom to work a lead to completion using all the investigative tools at our disposal. We assisted in evidence recovery at the Staten Island

landfill, were on call at the airports in the event a traveler raised any suspicions, and participated in search warrants, detention of illegal aliens, and surveillances. One of our agents obtained an arrest warrant, executed by FBI and GSA and USDA/OIG agents, for an individual who provided false statements directly related to the JTTF investigation.

As part of the JTTF, we went from the Intrepid to the 26th Street Garage, where we were joined by agents from other cities, who were willing to be detailed to New York for as much as four weeks at a time if that's what was necessary to help the effort. In order to make the most efficient and effective use of the now imposing OIG presence, and at the suggestion of the President's Council for Integrity and Efficiency, most of the participating OIG offices conglomerated into one OIG entity, with TIGTA and HUD as lead teams. The new assignment found the GSA/OIG separated into a first and second shift forcing us even more so to work with agents from other agencies. This separation allowed us to be exposed to different investigative methods and practices, and enlightened us with the knowledge of so many from diverse backgrounds, a privilege most are not exposed to their whole career.

The JTTF then relocated between 26 Federal Plaza and 290 Broadway, and as the investigation narrowed and the out of town agents returned to their own casework, many local OIG's continued to assist the JTTF in varying levels.

All the while, as was probably the case with most other OIG offices, those agents not specifically assigned to the JTTF had to take up additional responsibilities within our own office to keep the everyday casework progressing. Court dates were still pending, statutes of limitations were running near, and new agents needed to be trained, now a task with a new sense of immediacy. Everyday willing to go above and beyond, always keeping in mind those who gave it all those fateful days in September.

In the days and months since the attacks we, like so many others, in taking on the sometimes futile but ultimately necessary job of 'getting back to normal', have managed to come together, as an office, as a city, but most importantly as people. And the acts of heroism and basic human kindness that we've witnessed, afforded to us in part because of our position as law enforcement officers, have forever changed us.

We will always remember, but how we remember will determine how we will live. We must make every effort to use our memories positively. If in the rare instance we have happy memories, we must share them in the hopes that the good we've been exposed to will be seen by others, maybe even within themselves. And if our memories are of loved ones lost, undoubtedly sad, we must learn to live our lives as a testament to them and what they might have been able to accomplish if they'd be given the chance. 🕊

DONNA M. SPIEWAK

Special Agent in Charge, Office of Investigations, Office of Inspector General, Department of the Treasury

Driving towards Manhattan with Special Agent Ken Kelly, Washington Field Office, and observing the now infamous altered skyline on September 30, 2001, it suddenly struck me that I had no personal reference as to where the World Trade Center (WTC) Tower complex had been located. Ken pointed to where the twin towers used to stand; a feeling of sadness embraced us. Ken knew the WTC as a native New Yorker and working at JFK Airport while an Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) Special Agent. I knew the WTC only from the horrendous photographs of September 11, 2001. The reality of the mission we were about to embark on with Special Agent Jim Kozlowski, Los Angeles Sub-Office (LSO), suddenly struck home. So many lives were lost or severely impacted on September 11, 2001 in New York City, the Pentagon, and in Pennsylvania.

I began to wonder exactly what I got myself into by volunteering for this temporary duty assignment. For me,



World Trade Center Towers Complex, September 11, 2001

this was “personal”; I needed to do something, anything, to assist in the aftermath of such a national tragedy. Ken and Jim also had their reasons for volunteering. I’m sure their reasons were just as strong as mine. Thus our four-week journey began throughout the boroughs of New York City.

After the September 11, 2001 tragedy, the President’s Council on Integrity and Efficiency (PCIE) solicited the support of the OIG community to assist the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) in conducting the WTC investigation in New York City. Sixteen PCIE and Executive Council on Integrity and Efficiency (ECIE) organizations responded and provided special agents for this mission. TIGTA Associate Inspector General for Investigations Randy Stone was the coordinator for this PCIE initiative.

The special agents were assigned to two different squads, headed by the Special Agents in Charge (SACs) of the New York City HUD OIG and TIGTA offices. Each squad was separated into two teams headed by Assistant Special Agents in Charge (ASACs) from HUD OIG and TIGTA. Approximately fourteen special agents were assigned to each team.

Because the FBI offices at 26 Federal Plaza were temporarily without electricity or other essential services, an interim FBI command post was established in a multilevel garage in Manhattan. To enter this site was a real treat. One floor had been converted into the FBI control center, the “brains” of the operation, while another floor housed the work area where we awaited our assignments. To say we were not in the “lap of luxury” was an understatement.

That the FBI and other federal, state, and local law enforcement agencies in New York City were able to get such a colossal operation up and running so expeditiously, while still reeling from the shock and chaos surrounding the city was a major miracle.

From the very start of our assignment, the cooperation and esprit de corps immediately developed within the squads and teams of OIG special agents. Although we started out as 16 individual OIGs, within a matter of days, we became one entity working together for the mission. This was the first time in history that the OIG community came together as a whole to work jointly with other federal and local police agencies on such a tremendous endeavor.

Depending on our work location, (FBI Command Post or JFK Airport) our assignments were diverse. We worked in tandem with the FBI, INS, and New York Police Department (NYPD) as we as other OIG special agents conduct-

ing interviews, surveillances of businesses and individuals, and a variety of other investigative activities.

Towards the end of our assignment, in addition to the WTC investigative inquiries, New York City was confronted with the Anthrax scare; thus we responded to leads or requests for assistance related to that criminal activity.

The work location at JFK Airport was situated within the confines of the Port Authority Police Department (PAPD) complex. In order to accommodate the presence of 20 plus special agents during each shift, emergency vehicles were moved out of the large bay areas so that tables and folding chairs could be installed.

Our primary responsibility while assigned to JFK was to respond to the airport terminals when notified by airline officials of individuals that required further scrutiny prior to boarding international flights. Other inquiries involved a former airline agent circumventing the security and customs checkpoints at JFK by bringing his family members, who were arriving from a foreign country, off the airplane and through another departure/arrival corridor. This individual was arrested and charged with passport fraud and other related violations and is currently awaiting judicial action. Several cases involved foreign citizens who had visas to enter the United States for the purpose of attending flight schools. These individuals either failed to actually attend the training or legitimately completed the training. Other individuals interviewed were illegal aliens, out-of-status individuals who had overstayed their visas for extended periods of time, or, for some reason, had come to the attention of airline officials at the time of their check-in for their international flights. In-depth interviews, searches of individuals’ luggage, along with INS and law enforcement inquiries, were simultaneously conducted on the spot. Only after these inquiries were completed was the decision made whether to allow the individuals to continue on their international trips or to detain them for additional questioning and investigation of their backgrounds.

While working our shift one afternoon, FBI Director Robert S. Mueller, III visited the Command Post to thank all the personnel assigned to the WTC investigation for their hard work and dedication. Director Mueller took the time to stop and talk with many individuals prior to his departure.

During the second week of our tour of duty, I decided it was time for me to visit Ground Zero. This would be one of several trips to the site, but, for me, it was the most profound. By that time, tons of debris had been removed from the area, including the crushed emergency vehicles, buildings, and, of course, the remains of the victims. The first thing I became aware of as I walked with Jim Kozlowski (LSO) and Linda Farnell (Department of Interior OIG), was the indescribable smell in the air—a mix of the fumes from the still burning debris from the fire and implosion of the towers and sur-

From the very start of our assignment, the cooperation and esprit de corps immediately developed within the squads and teams of OIG special agents.

rounding buildings. The second thing I noticed were the blank stares on the faces of the firemen, police officers and other emergency personnel working in the area.

Walking down to the actual crater area at Ground Zero, the impact and the degree of devastation became reality. Where once stood two towering structures and several smaller buildings in a vibrant bustling area of commerce and activity were now shells of buildings and total destruction. Many of the fronts of the buildings facing the WTC area were covered with red tarps to hold any debris from falling to the ground. Everywhere United States flags were draped on buildings, cars, and on poles stuck in the ground.

One poignant moment occurred as we were walking back from Ground Zero when I noticed a Hallmark Store. It was so eerie to see the items previously displayed on shelves now in total disarray and covered with soot. As I walked by the doorway, I noticed a single shoe just lying on the ground. I wondered, who did it belong to, where was the other shoe, and why was it still there? I'll never know the answers to those questions. Perhaps I really don't want to know.

Our assignment in New York City drew to a close and on October 26, 2001, the out-of-town OIG personnel were told to go back home . . . to our families, friends, and the comfort of our homes . . . never to take any of them for granted again. 🏠

OFFICE OF INSPECTOR GENERAL

Social Security Administration

Immediately following the terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center, the Social Security Administration Office of the Inspector General (SSA OIG) was on site in New York providing assistance. SSA OIG has played a prominent role in the overall response since September 11th and continues its efforts making Homeland Security a primary focus. We have been actively involved in supporting the national investigation and we are advancing an aggressive agenda to improve SSA's business processes to prevent identity fraud and the integrity of the Social Security number.

Some highlights follow:

Our agents were at the World Trade Center immediately assisting in the rescue efforts and site security and also were assigned duties at the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) Command Center to process information and work investigative leads. In addition, we had agents assigned to the FBI Newark Command Center and to Joint Terrorist Task Forces (JTTF) throughout the country. SSA OIG Electronic Crimes Team agents offered support to FBI's Computer Analysis Response Team. Not only have SSA OIG agents been called to support the FBI investigation, agents were also tasked to assist SSA in establishing processing centers to work with the families of the victims of the bombing to facilitate receipt of the benefits available to them through SSA programs.

On Thursday, September 13th, the FBI formally requested our participation in this investigation in a memorandum from their Director. It was agreed that SSA OIG would assign full-time representatives to FBI's Strategic Information and Operations Center (SIOC), the National Infrastructure Protection Center (NIPC) in Washington, D.C., and the Baltimore FBI Office, which was designated

as the national clearinghouse for FBI requests for SSN information.

To help us assist in the national investigation, the Acting Commissioner of SSA authorized full disclosure of SSA information pertaining to this investigation to law enforcement officers. Also, a special agreement was negotiated between the Acting Commissioner of SSA with Commissioner Rossotti of the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) that allowed us to disclose information from wage and earnings maintained by SSA to the FBI. The release of this information was made possible by the "Imminent Danger" clause of the IRS code. To date, our staff has written over 103 separate programs resulting in an analysis of over one billion records in SSA's mainframe, made over 70,000 mainframe queries across the country, and coordinated law enforcement requests for copies of over 1,400 SSN applications. And these requests and queries continue. The sharing of data has proved invaluable in tracking the movements and habits of terrorists.

As Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) detainees and material witness warrants expired, many of these suspects have been charged with SSN misuse to ensure that they remain in the judicial process. In accordance with 42 USC 408(a)(7)(B), it is unlawful for an individual to misuse, for any purpose, an SSN not assigned to him or her with the intent to deceive. SSA OIG Counsel staff members assigned as special prosecutors have prepared criminal charges related to SSN misuse on those persons with suspected ties to terrorist organizations and have assisted in their prosecution. To date, 17 individuals associated with the national investigation have been charged with SSN misuse.

Both SSA and the OIG promptly accepted the challenge of addressing the Agency's role in homeland security. Recognizing the SSN's importance in non-citizens' assimilation in U.S. society, SSA established an Enumeration Task Force to examine and establish policy that would strengthen the agency's procedures. As a member of this Task Force, the OIG has shared many insights and ideas with the agency, which we believe will help increase the integrity of the enumeration process.

We have produced in-depth responses to two congressional inquiries assessing SSA's policies and procedures for the issuance of original and replacement SSN cards. In early October 2001, we assessed SSA's business processes for issuing and protecting SSNs. This assessment addressed evidence presented with SSN applications; computerized controls; SSA's accounting for SSN cards; additional training for SSA employees; public awareness on the proper use and dissemination of the SSN; and, SSA's coordination efforts with other Federal agencies.

Later in October, we assessed SSA's programs and operations to identify counterfeit and stolen SSN cards and described SSA's coordination efforts with other Federal agencies to identify suspected terrorists. Additionally, in October, we provided our views to SSA's Enumeration Task Force on techniques to improve SSN verification and decrease incidents of identity theft with new categories of SSNs, suggestions on photo identifications, and additional automated controls.

Our Office of Audit is also conducting a follow-up review of SSA's procedures for verifying evidentiary documents presented by non-citizens in applying for original SSNs. We will evaluate SSA's progress in implementing prior recommendations and also

quantify the extent to which SSA is detecting false documents presented by foreign-born individuals.

As the national investigation continues, OIG special agents have recently been assigned to the Foreign Terrorist Tracking Task Force (FTTTF), in Arlington, Virginia, to assist the efforts to identify terrorists still present in the U.S. and those that may attempt to enter the country. Our staff is currently conducting mainframe queries on over 29,000 names supplied by the FTTTF.

Under the direction of the Department of Justice, we are supporting security initiatives at the nation's airports and other critical infrastructure sites. OI is working with other agencies, such as the Department of Transportation, the INS, U.S. Marshals Service, the Federal Aviation Administration, local law enforcement/Homeland Security offices, and the FBI to ensure the safety of the traveling public. Operation Safe Travel/Tarmac has focused on those airport employees who work in secured areas that have falsified employment applications and misused SSNs to obtain jobs and high-level security badges.

Since the first airport operation in Salt Lake City in December 2001, a total of seven joint law enforcement airport operations have been conducted in seven different

cities resulting in over 200 arrests. The primary charges have been related to SSN misuse, false statements, and INS violations.

Our office is proud of its response to the shock of September 11th and it remains committed in its investigative and audit work to support efforts to thwart similar acts of terror in the future. 🏠

