

Statement by Joseph Morris

Former Port Authority Police Chief of Department

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Thank you, Chairman Kean, Vice Chairman Hamilton and distinguished members of the Commission for the opportunity to share with you my experiences on September 11, 2001, when I responded in the rescue efforts following the attacks upon the World Trade Center.

My name is Joseph Morris and I served over 31 years with the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey Police Department. I was appointed to the Department on May 8, 1972, and rose through the ranks to eventually become Chief of the Department on September 26, 2001. This past January, I retired from the Port Authority Police to join ManTech Security Technologies Corporation.

Let me start by saying that what transpired on September 11, 2001, is forever etched in my mind. I can only imagine the depth of anguish that family members of those lost that day must live through and I want to express a heart-felt sympathy to them.

The Port Authority Police Department was created in 1928 and provides police services at those facilities under Port Authority jurisdiction. These facilities include John F. Kennedy International Airport, LaGuardia Airport, Newark Liberty International Airport, Teterboro Airport, the Downtown Manhattan Heliport, the George Washington Bridge, the Lincoln Tunnel, the Holland Tunnel, three bridges linking New Jersey to Staten Island, the Teleport, New York and New Jersey Marine Terminals, the PATH rail system, the Port Authority Bus Terminal and the World Trade Center.

Our Police Department maintains a Central Police Desk that historically was located at the Department's Headquarters. One of the primary functions of the Central Police Desk is to monitor and provide the communications link for the intra-department communications as well as the inter-agency communications. It is designated as the Level One Emergency Operations Center as part of the Incident Command System. The Central Police Desk serves as an additional communications resource to the different facilities during incidents, making many of the notifications and providing information.

Alan Reiss had spoken of the Port Authority having constructed three incident command centers in the World Trade Center – one on the Sixty-Fourth floor of the North Tower, one on the 22nd floor of the North Tower, and one on the B1 sub-level of the complex. The agency also had an alternate Incident Command Center on the first floor of the Journal Square Transportation Center.

The Port Authority Police are unique to law enforcement in several ways. First, all members of the department have police powers in the states of New York and New Jersey. Second, a majority of the department is cross-trained in fighting fires. At the three major airports, personnel are trained and FAA-certified as Aircraft Rescue Firefighters, a specialty that entails responding to an aircraft disaster with the express purpose of providing an avenue of escape for passengers and crew and to rescue persons who need assistance. After that objective is accomplished, the aircraft fire becomes a structural fire and the local firefighting agency extinguishes the fire. Police officers assigned to the World Trade Center Command were also trained and certified as structural firefighters. They would be the first to respond to fire alarms in the World Trade Center complex and report the fire and need to respond to the Fire Department of New York City.

Our Police Department also is unique in that it interacts with numerous other local, state and federal government agencies on a daily basis as part of its operations. These jurisdictions are located in the two states that encompass ten counties within eleven cities and municipalities. The Port Authority as an agency does business within three federal court jurisdictions, and federal agencies have, for the most part, independent offices in both states. The Department is an active member on many interagency task forces, including the FBI Joint Terrorist Task Force out of the New York and Newark offices and Drug Enforcement Administration Task forces and U.S. Customs Task forces at JFK and Newark Liberty International Airport.

On the morning of September 11, 2001, there were 1,301 sworn members on the Police Department. They were performing their duties and responsibilities to ensure the safety of the public and passage of commerce at some of the busiest and most vital transportation facilities in the country. September 11, 2001, is without doubt the most tragic day in the long history of the Port Authority. The agency lost 84 members of its family, which included 37 police officers and supervisors. This remains the largest single-day loss of police staff by any force in the history of U.S. law enforcement.

On the morning of September 11, I held the rank of Police Inspector and was assigned to LaGuardia Airport as its Commanding Officer. In the blink of an eye that morning, my life, as well as everyone else's life, changed forever. While sitting in my office, I was informed that an aircraft had flown into the World Trade Center. I turned on my office television set and observed the north tower's upper floors engulfed in fire.

I initiated a mobilization of personnel following long-held Department plans and procedures for response to the World Trade Center for aircraft disasters and high-rise

fires. The Command assembled 17 sworn personnel which included police officers, detectives and supervisors. The assembled contingent included personnel who had worked at the World Trade Center. Those responding, as well as myself, had in our possession our Aircraft Rescue Firefighter proximity gear. Seven vehicles, including marked and unmarked sedans and the Emergency Service Unit Truck, were utilized for transportation. The mobilization of the LaGuardia Command personnel was reported to the Central Police Desk.

Our police caravan used the Brooklyn Queens Expressway and it provided me a panoramic view of the World Trade Center Towers fully engulfed in flames. At that point, I realized the buildings were under a coordinated attack. I was unable to make contact with the Central Police Desk via the All-Facility Channel. The LaGuardia Command heard me, but I received no response from the Central Desk.

The Williamsburg Bridge provided our access to Manhattan; traffic was restricted to emergency response vehicles only. While crossing the bridge, I realized that this day was completely different than the 1993 World Trade Center bombing and response that I had taken part in. That day I had responded from our police headquarters with James Nachstein, the Police Department's Chief of Operations. I remember his words early during that February afternoon that "we were involved in a tidal wave and it was our job not to drown and to bring order to chaos." He also spoke at one point about communications being chaotic and that one must rely on the responders' experience, training and initiative using the equipment available. Those words rang clear that day. I also had served as the Western Zone Commander; the Zone included the World Trade Center Command, so I knew its geography and operations.

I instructed the LaGuardia Command to contact and instruct all the afternoon shift police personnel to immediately respond to the airport realizing there would be a great demand for officers at the World Trade Center and also at the airport to meet the extra security demands that I anticipated would be put in place by the Federal Aviation Administration.

As we entered Manhattan and approached the World Trade Center on the downtown streets, I observed the conditions. We made our way to the World Trade Center Barclay Street Entrance/Exit Ramp and left our sedan vehicles in that area. I instructed all to bring their proximity gear and to use Barclay Street and respond to West Street where the Department's Mobile Command Post would have responded, as directed in response plans. Our Emergency Service Vehicle also responded to West Street.

At West Street just north of Vesey Street the Department's Mobile Command Post had set up. At that location there were approximately 40 to 50 officers, sergeants and lieutenants. I was the highest-ranking commander at that location and conferred with NYPD First Deputy Commissioner Joseph Dunne for a short period as he was responding to the NYPD Command Center at One Police Plaza. Communications, both radio and cell phone, were not working from the Mobile Command Post. The radio service was out on both Channel A and the 800 system after being damaged by the falling debris and fire at the World Trade Center buildings.

I spoke to personnel who had responded from headquarters and knew Public Safety Director Fred Morrone, Chief James Romito and Inspector Anthony Infante had entered and gone up Tower One with the purpose of making contact with Port Authority Executive Director Neil Levin at the Operations Center on the 64th floor. I also was

informed the other responding Chief, William Hall, had responded to the World Trade Center Police Desk. I spoke with Port Authority Emergency Services Sergeant John Flynn, who informed me of what he knew of the situation. I had the police personnel break up into groups of three to four officers to be teamed up with a sergeant or lieutenant. Other Port Authority employees were present at that location, and I informed them they should stay at that location until more information was gathered for responses. I also observed a number of emergency responders and vehicles, but relatively few civilians moving north on West Street.

After being at that location for about four to five minutes with no radio and little phone communications and receiving information from personnel, I decided to respond to World Trade Center Tower One with the purpose of meeting at the Incident Command Post that would have been set up with the Fire Department, Port Authority World Trade Center Command police supervisor and World Trade Center Operations personnel in the lobby. I responded with a Lieutenant who had nine years of experience at the complex as a police officer and sergeant, including the 1993 bombing. I informed the supervisors I was going to the Incident Command Post and to remain in that location until I returned with a plan. While walking south on West Street in the area of the Northern Bridge, I observed many dark objects high above in the air coming from Building Two and the tower itself then started to collapse. I turned and ran from the avalanche of debris and dove into our Mobile Command Post to escape from being inundated by the dust cloud.

Personnel ran seeking cover in the best manner available. This period of time I can only describe as being in a warm whiteout blizzard of fine granulated powder that

invaded everything. During this period, we assisted persons who came to the vehicle seeking shelter and aid. Once the cloud of debris passed, personnel came out of cover.

Port Authority personnel again gathered to regroup at the Mobile Command Post. At this time, Captain Anthony Whitaker, the World Trade Center Commanding Officer, came to the Mobile Command Post and warned of the North Tower being in danger of also coming down. I remember Alan Reiss stopping and returning to the World Trade Center in an attempt to better assess the situation. I knew that the Mobile Command Post must be moved north on West Street. It had to first have its air filters cleaned because it stalled due to the dust cloud. After being cleaned of debris and being restarted it was moved. It was moved and parked on West Street between Murray and Chambers Street. More Port Authority personnel gathered at this location. Personnel were being accounted for and rescue and investigative plans were being developed with supervisors. It was during these discussions that Tower One collapsed. Again the avalanche and cloud took over the area and personnel took cover the best they could. I reentered the Mobile Command for whatever protection it could offer.

After this cloud passed, regrouping again took place and Port Authority personnel, both police and civilians, gathered at Manhattan Borough Community College. The College provided hit-or-miss hard wire telephone capabilities, cell phone service was even less reliant and our radios were not operating. Port Authority personnel, both civilian and police, did accounting of personnel and assessment of available equipment. After speaking to Edward Sullivan, a Vice President of the College, we established the gym as the Port Authority compound for our rescue and recovery

operations. We shared that space with medical personnel who responded to provide medical aid for persons rescued from the debris.

Chief Hall appeared and met with Inspector Fields, Inspector Norris and myself. As information came in, personnel were delegated responsibilities, and personnel assigned tasks. Sergeant John Flynn was delegated to respond to the World Trade Center site to develop and assess what needed to be done there. Chief Hall after a period of time responded to the Command Center located at Journal Square Transportation Center that had been initiated by Captain Stryker and responded to by Inspector Ceccarelli from Headquarters. That location was determined to be the area where Senior Management level staff were to report and did report. Detectives assigned to our Intelligence Unit had responded and represented the Port Authority at the NYPD Command Center at One Police Plaza. A Detective Sergeant was sent to the Chelsea Piers to represent the agency for department activities taking place at that location. A Detective Lieutenant responded to the FBI Joint Terrorist Task Force Command Center.

Chief Hall instructed me to respond to the incident Command Post that he believed was located at Vesey and West Street. I found nothing at that location and responded to One Police Plaza and spoke to our representatives. They informed me of Port Authority-related information. I also spoke with NYPD First Deputy Commissioner Joseph Dunne, filling him in on Port Authority Police actions at our different facilities and at the World Trade Center. After speaking to him, I returned to the College to assist in the rescue and recovery operations.

Communications with the Central Police Desk at the Journal Square Transportation Center in Jersey City improved when a radio shop employee had

responded to a high-rise under construction and installed equipment that brought back communications over the All-Facility Channel. That became our main source of communications. Later in the day, our mobile Command Post, parked outside the College, worked with Verizon employees to establish hard line phone communications. As the morning became afternoon then evening, some order began to be restored at the World Trade Center site, and retired Port Authority Chief Nachstein's words rang true and guiding. Communications remained limited and individuals took actions to solve problems at hand. These individual actions started to stabilize the situation even as World Trade Center Building Seven remained fully engulfed in fire and collapsed late in the afternoon. The Port Authority Police chain of command had been reestablished, realizing the reality of our personnel losses. During the late afternoon, I was designated as the Port Authority Police Site Commander. Supervisors were delegated to account for all police personnel who had responded to the attacks. During the early evening, two of our police personnel, Sergeant John McLoughlin and Officer Wil Jimeno, were located in the collapse and rescue operations began taking place to bring them out – Wil I was brought out first, and the next morning, John was rescued.

During the entire incident, I was cognizant and anticipated what might happen next. One had to anticipate other terrorist actions, not just at the World Trade Center site, but also at our other facilities. They needed to be protected and an increased presence of security made certain that the extra manpower sent to Lower Manhattan did not jeopardize staffing levels at the other facilities. Supervisors were delegated to account for all police personnel who had responded to the attacks, and who were present at the other facilities. Planning for personnel coverage started for the upcoming day and week

to come. After discussions, the personnel were placed on 12-hour tours, with all time off cancelled and even those out on medical leave were brought back to work, if physically able.

As Alan Reiss testified, the attacks of September 11 were not the first time that the World Trade Center was targeted and attacked by terrorists. The 1993 bombing taught us quite a bit about preparedness and responsiveness. One of the most important lessons learned from 1993, which has been even more pronounced in the wake of September 11, is the importance of coordination between local, state and federal agencies.

The Port Authority as an agency has historically held annual physical response drills as well as more frequent tabletop exercises at all their facilities. These drills involved other government agencies as well as Port Authority tenants in testing and developing their decision-making capabilities. The recent Millennium/Y2K and OP/Sail 2000 events involved review and planning at all the facilities, but especially at the World Trade Center. Incident Command training and drills were also done on a multi-agency basis. Just weeks before 9/11, Port Authority executive staff, along with dozens of local, state and federal agencies participated in the "Gateway 2000" tabletop exercise on a simulated Weapons of Mass Destruction attack at Port Newark. This exercise tested the participant's ability to work under a unified command structure as the situation evolved.

The Port Authority has remained on a heightened state of alert at all its facilities since 9/11 and continues its close working relationship with the many existing law enforcement entities. The sharing of intelligence information, pooling of resources and exercises serve as an important deterrent in the war on terror. These working

relationships must continue because 9/11 has underscored the old adage that united we stand, divided we fall.

There are many horrible stories from that tragic day, but there are also incidents of extraordinary heroism. Tens of thousands of persons escaped the World Trade Center complex – one of the most successful rescue efforts in human history. A large percentage of the building occupants on the floors below the crash attacks – some estimates as high as 99 percent – were able to get out alive thanks to the physical stairwell improvements, actions learned in fire drills, individual fire wardens, dedicated civilian operations staff as well as the valiant efforts of the Port Authority Police, the Fire Department of New York and the New York Police Department, and other uniformed responders and support personnel. This could not have been achieved without careful planning.

Distinguished Commissioners, the September 11th terrorist attacks and the extent of their carnage on that terrible Tuesday is something this country had never experienced. The Port Authority Police, as well as the other uniformed emergency personnel, responded that day as they had in the past, as they were trained and equipped to do. It proved to be all too costly. The scale of events on 9/11 has now mandated and created new approaches for anticipating, planning, training, equipping, controlling and taking the offensive against terrorist attacks.