



*U.S. Coast Guard Oral History Program*

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## Attack on America: September 11, 2001 and the U.S. Coast Guard

U.S. COAST GUARD ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM  
Operation Noble Eagle Documentation Project

Interviewee: **Lieutenant Commander Lee A. Hanford,  
USCGR**

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Interviewer: PAC Peter Capelotti, USCGR

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**Q:** How long have you been in the Coast Guard Sir?

**LCDR Handford:** I've been in the Coast Guard since the summer of 1991. I was on active duty until, I guess, August of 1991 to July of 1998, and then I've been in the Reserves since then.

**Q:** Right. How did you come to be in the Coast Guard? Are you Academy or OCS [Officer Candidate School]?

**LCDR Handford:** I received a direct commission in the Law Specialist Program so I was a direct commissioned lawyer coming out of law school.

**Q:** Oh you were, okay.

**LCDR Handford:** I was on active duty as a Law Specialist.

**Q:** Where did you go to Law School?

**LCDR Handford:** Tulane Law School in New Orleans.

**Q:** Oh, okay. I was just down there interviewing [Rear] Admiral [Roy J.] Casto [Commander, Eighth Coast Guard District] about three weeks ago; my first trip to New Orleans. How did you find your way to the Port Security Unit [PSU]?

**LCDR Handford:** I have prior military service; enlisted service in the U.S. Army.

**Q:** Okay.

**LCDR Handford:** I had about seven years of active duty.

**Q:** As an enlisted?

**LCDR Handford:** As an enlisted, and then another, I guess, another three or so years of Reserves ending up as an E-7 in the Army Special Forces. So I have a Special Operations background and found out about the port security unit when I was on active duty with the Coast Guard and transferred from Coast Guard Headquarters to, at that time, 5th District, and then later LANTAREA [Coast Guard Atlantic Area] Legal and I found out about the port security unit. I found out they needed some assistance with training and spent a couple weekends coming out to assist them in training. I think I did some communications training, some Field Expedient Antennas, M203 weapons training and a couple other things. So I sort of had a lot of those basic skills from my Army training, and when I came off active duty from the Coast Guard I was interested in getting back operational as opposed to going into the legal program in the Reserves.

**Q:** Is the star on your parachute, is that significant of something?

**LCDR Handford:** Yes, that's a Senior Parachutist Wing. That means I was qualified as a Jump Master and I had a certain minimum number of jumps. I ended up, when I got out of the Army, I had about 60 jumps.

**Q:** So you must have fitted right in at home with the PSU folks, and you've been with the unit for three years now, is that right?

**LCDR Handford:** Since the summer of '98.

**Q:** Uh huh, four years.

**LCDR Handford:** Four years.

**Q:** What positions have you had in the unit?

**LCDR Handford:** I began in 1998 as the Operations Officer and fleeted up to Executive Officer [XO] in the summer of 2001.

**Q:** Okay, the summer of 2001. Could you talk a little bit about the unit and then we'll get into what you were doing last summer?

**LCDR Handford:** Well the PSU is a deployable Reserve unit that consists of 117 deployable personnel with another 25 or so extra personnel to be assigned. We're designed to deploy outside of the continental United States [CONUS] to provide port security in foreign harbors that are controlled by the United States in wartime and other than war situations.

**Q:** Had you deployed with the unit before 9/11?

**LCDR Handford:** No. Sometimes the word deployment is tossed around. There are some people who consider any OCONUS [Outside the continental U.S.] training evolutions to be deployments, and if you consider that, then I did have a previous deployment to Egypt. We did a two-week deployment to Egypt in 1999 I believe it was in support of Operation Bright Star. Actually, like I said, I think that was considered Exercise Bright Star. However, we were an operational element since we were actually performing port security for that exercise; real live port security.

**Q:** Oh, so you weren't participating in a port security exercise? You were doing port security for the exercise.

**LCDR Handford:** That's correct. That was based on the arrival in theater of the Maritime - I can't remember the name of them right now – they're the U.S. cargo ships; they're RO/RO [Roll On-Roll Off] cargo ships that carry significant amounts of material for Marine divisions and so forth. And when they come into a port they're required to have some sort of U.S. port security.

**Q:** Is that fairly typical for the PSUs to do two-week exercises in your annual training; ADT-type [Active Duty Training] situations?

**LCDR Handford:** Yes it is.

**Q:** So that must be a fairly heavy logistical lift because you have to get 117 people on the same page for the same two-weeks.

**LCDR Handford:** It is, and the actual schedule has varied over the years. But the different port security units are designed to alternate years as to what they do for their two week ADT; for the two-week Active duty training. They have INCONUS [in the continental U.S.] two-week training periods that they'll do one year and those are normally set up to be conducted at Camp LeJeune where the Port Security Training Detachment is, and that's a two-week training that culminates in an exercise.

**Q:** Is that a Coast Guard unit; the Training Detachment?

**LCDR Handford:** It is a Coast Guard unit, and then in alternate years you would expect to be deployed for an OCONUS exercise and that would be the . . . that's the optimum. That doesn't always work that way and the intent has changed over the years. Sometimes they say, well, you'll do INCONUS one year and then another year you'll stay at the unit for two-weeks and just do Unit training for two-weeks, and then another year you will deploy. It sort of varies. When I joined the unit in 1998 I did not go on a two-week deployment because the unit had been called up for – I'm trying to remember the name of it - it would have been March 1998 there was a generalized Call-Up for a possible contingency operation in Iraq. It wasn't Desert Storm or Desert Thunder. It was some other potential exercise or potential operation.

**Q:** Right.

**LCDR Handford:** And the unit was called up and conducted Unit Training in preparation for deployment for a two-week period in March of 1998 and then ended up not going anywhere. So that was our two weeks. As you know, the typical Reserve pattern is typically one weekend a month and then a two-week ADT per year. That covered that one that year. And then the next year we went to Egypt for two weeks and then in 2000 we did the TRADET "deployment" where we moved to Camp Lejeune for two-weeks, had a training period with the Training Detachment there and that culminated into an exercise at Camp Lejeune, and then we returned to the unit. And then in the year of 2001 we did a two-week training period at the unit where we did various types of training that was able to be done at the unit. We did two weeks there in June of 2001, and then of course, the next thing was September 11th.

**Q:** What do you do in civilian life Sir?

**LCDR Handford:** I'm a corporate attorney with a small office of a large law firm. The office is in Norfolk. The firm is out of Richmond, Virginia. It's called McGuire Woods, LLP.

**Q:** Do you remember where you were on the morning of the 11th?

**LCDR Handford:** Yes. I was at work and was in my office, and I remember, I think my secretary came in and said that there had been an explosion at the World Trade Center. I said, oh, okay, and then she left and I continued working. She started to bring in more reports to me as the morning wore on and

eventually I went in . . . they had the television on in the conference room and I went in and watched the television for awhile. I continued to work that day out and then . . . I actually had, my family was in town; some of my family was in town for a vacation that week, and they were staying at Fort Story. So I was out at Fort Story at a vacation condo that evening when I received the Call Up.

**Q:** Do you remember who that was who called you?

**LCDR Handford:** I believe it was a call from my CO; Commander [Robert W.] Grabb, who called me and said that the unit had been activated and to report the next morning.

**Q:** You folks saddled up and drove the boats to New York. Can you explain a little bit about how that happened and what greeted you when you got there?

**LCDR Handford:** Yes. We . . . let's see, that would have been a Tuesday evening that we were alerted and then Wednesday morning we reported to the unit. It so happened that much of our Boats' Division was already at the unit because they had scheduled a couple days of training that week, and so some of them went home to get the rest of their gear. The rest of them stayed at the Unit and started packing out. Quite a few personnel were able to report that morning and throughout the day, and we did pack up for a land movement. We arranged for four buses to take personnel and personal gear packed underneath and then flat bed trucks for all our other equipment. We ended up . . . the equipment began - if I remember correctly - the equipment began to be packed up Thursday morning and by - we actually may have begun on Wednesday night. Some of the trucks may have come in Wednesday night - but by about noon on Thursday we boarded the buses and left and all the trucks had left by then. We also drove our four vehicles up. I think two or three of the vehicles were towing two or three of the boats and then everything else, like I said, on the flat beds.

We arrived in New York that evening at Activities New York, fairly late, and ended up getting checked in fairly quickly, fairly rapidly. Then we ended up sleeping in the Activities New York gym that evening. They essentially rolled out the padded mats in the gym and we rolled out our sleeping bags and we slept there that evening and the next morning we started getting set up.

**Q:** Who do you get your tasking from directly? Who would mobilize you? Who does PSU 305 report to in the chain of command?

**LCDR Handford:** Atlantic Area; it's AAFP, which I believe is the Port Security section.

**Q:** Okay, so you're not . . . you're an Area asset?

**LCDR Handford:** That's correct.

**Q:** Did you know that you were going to Activities New York to stage there or was that all done in transit, or did everybody just sort of make do? And on the other side of that is, what kind of interaction do you have with, say, the small boat station; Station New York, and so forth, in terms of interaction between your type of cruise; the traditional SAR [Search and Rescue] cruise, and in terms of interaction, in terms of maintenance, and all those sorts of things?

**LCDR Handford:** Well as far as the latter part of your question the answer is virtually none. We rarely have any interaction with the small boat stations. They train for a different mission. The boats are different. The equipment's different. Everything's different.

**Q:** Right. Is there a different culture that goes with that do you think?

**LCDR Handford:** Oh absolutely, absolutely.

**Q:** What are some of the elements that would distinguish, say, a port security boat crew from a small boat crew at a small boat station?

**LCDR Handford:** Well this will partially be surmised on my part because I'm not that familiar with the "Blue" Coast Guard small boat mission. However, I think some generalities can be stated. Certainly the small boat mission at a Coast Guard station is A: it is a firehouse-type mission. In other words the boat crews are prepared to go out based on emergency calls or routine calls, or whatever calls may come in. We on the other hand; the PSU on the other hand, trains and operates on a 24/7 basis. Our ROCs [Required Operational Capabilities] and POEs [Projected Operational Environment] call for 24-hour coverage on whatever high value asset we're assigned to protect. The other difference is the type of mission of course. The small boat stations are in a rescue/lifesaving mode. We do not train for that at all, or if we do, very minimally, just for some cross-training. We don't save lives. I hate to put it crassly but we're out there to take lives if that becomes necessary. So it's a completely different mission. It's a war-fighting mission as opposed to a search and rescue mission.

**Q:** Which makes you somewhat unique in the Coast Guard. I've heard folks refer to the Blue Coast Guard. Does the Blue Coast Guard have a name for you guys?

**LCDR Handford:** I don't know.

**Q:** Do they call you the Green Coast Guard or the Camouflage Coast Guard, or what?

**LCDR Handford:** They may.

**Q:** But not that you guys have heard?

**LCDR Handford:** Not that we've actually heard. Actually what appears to be the case is that very few people in the Coast Guard really know about us. Very few know about us.

**Q:** Did you run into that in New York?

**LCDR Handford:** We did indeed. If I remember correctly - and maybe a Commander Grabb will remember better than I - on September 12th there were a lot of phone calls going back and forth regarding where we'd be staging out of and what kind of support we needed, where we would be located, and there was a lot of confusion regarding that. And certainly, I think, Activities New York probably didn't know what to expect as far as what we brought, what we needed, and that sort of thing. When we arrived we immediately set out on Thursday to find suitable locations to launch the boats.

**Q:** Right.

**LCDR Handford:** We found that the suitable location was not the small boat station that's almost next to Activities New York, but was what they call MOT-B, which is the Military Ocean Terminal Bayonne, which is, of course, over in Bayonne.

**Q:** Right. I did an exercise there in 1989.

**LCDR Handford:** Okay, so you know very well where that is. Of course there are . . . we did it out of the - I'm trying to think if it was a Group - was there a Group office there at Bayonne?

**Q:** There maybe now. There wasn't then. There was nothing there then.

**LCDR Handford:** I think there's a Group office there. There are a couple of black hulls.

**Q:** Okay. I know that the [USCGC] *Katherine Walker* [WLM-552] was there and stages out of there now, but there were no Coast Guard assets over there when we were there.

**LCDR Handford:** Right. They have a fairly small building over there and some pier space. They operate some - what looked to me if I remember correctly - some non-standard small . . .

**Q:** Harbor-type stuff.

**LCDR Handford:** . . . harbor-type boats; small harbor-type boats, you know, 27 footers. And of course a couple of tugs, I think, of the *Chock*-class [65-foot Small Harbor Tug (WYTL)]; that type of tug, and a couple of the larger black hulls.

**Q:** When you got out on the water that next day what was the scene like in New York Harbor?

**LCDR Handford:** Well I think you'd probably have to talk to a boat crew member about that. I did not actually go on up to New York and go on-scene. We were too busy getting other things together. I did have a long distance view, if you will, from the top of the hill next to the Verazanno Narrows Bridge. You could go up there with a pair of binoculars and they had some; the Park Service had some big eyes up there. Of course the smoke plume was still very prominent, and from what I understand from the crew, it was pretty significant.

When they finally got underway and got up into that area there was a lot of confusion. I think the civilian boat fleet was still taking people from Manhattan. And we eventually, I believe, came up and became primarily operational when the USNS *Comfort* [T-AH20], which is a hospital ship, entered the harbor and took up a position at the piers north of the Trade Center area.

**Q:** When you got to Activities New York were you chopped to them or did you remain under the command of Atlantic Area? I mean where did you get your tasking from as far as what parts of the harbor you would patrol and those sorts of issues?

**LCDR Handford:** I believe that was primarily Activities New York. The Operations Officer can probably give you a much better feel for that. As the XO I was primarily interested in making sure people had places to sleep and to eat and things like that.

**Q:** Was that a problem, what with the chaos in the city, or was it a bit different over in Staten Island?

**LCDR Handford:** Not so much really. There's a parade field on Activities New York and we were given permission to set up our camp on the parade field. So we set up our GP Medium tents and what are called Drash tents on the parade field. We basically set up . . . our home away from home; the PSU is designed to do that. We are designed to be able to be lifted into theater and then start operations within 24-hours of arriving in theater, and also being self sufficient with the exception of water and fuel for up to 30-days.

**Q:** And you were mobilized for 30-days under Title 14 that first day?

**LCDR Handford:** The first day I believe that's correct. We were mobilized for 30-days under Title 14. Later on that was corrected and it was probably several weeks later they backdated a Title 10 mobilization to, I believe it was the 13th.

**Q:** Right.

**LCDR Handford:** So we really were under two sets of orders. We had a day or two of Title 14 and then all the rest were Title 10; quite a bit of confusion. Quite bit of e-mails back and forth between HRSIC [Human Resource Services and Information Center], PERSRU [Personnel Reporting Unit] and LANTAREA [Atlantic Area] trying to figure how to do the proper paperwork.

**Q:** Do you feel that - because I knew there were a lot of After-Action Reports that I've read from sort of more traditional Reserve structures; Reserve units that were having all sorts of problems with clearances, expired ID cards, weapons quals [qualifications], boat quals and all those sorts of things - is that less of a problem for you guys because you seem much more operationally prepared?

**LCDR Handford:** Well I can't speak to the issues that other commands were having, but as far as we're concerned, that's correct. We usually do not have problems with clearances. Weapons quals are kept up. We virtually have a gun shoot going on every one of our drill weekends with one division or another shooting one type of weapon or another.

**Q:** Do you make use of your - the policemen and the firemen in the unit - do you make use of local ranges or do you have your own ranges, or how does that work?

**LCDR Handford:** Primarily we make use of the Yorktown range and secondarily we use the Fort Eustis ranges; the Army ranges, and we also utilize what I believe is actually a Navy range for our crew weapons underway shoots. We go down to Hobucken, North Carolina, and there is a Navy range off of Hobucken that we go to. We also utilize some ranges at Quantico. We've also utilized ranges at Fort Pickett, which is, I believe, an Army National Guard Base. And not Fort Lee, but I believe there's one more Army National Guard Base not too far away that we use.

**Q:** Does that become an issue when you're in liaison with, say, Activities New York or a similar type? This is a domestic U.S. harbor and you've got weapons that, from what I heard yesterday, can fire something like four miles. Are there discussions that go on between the PSU and, say, an Activities or a Group, or an MSO [Marine Safety Office], about Rules of Engagement [ROE], or are your rules your rules when you're involved in protecting an asset?

**LCDR Handford:** Well I would say it's both. We do have our rules. We have a standard set of boat Rules of Engagement for example that we use. We also operate under the Commandant's Use of Force Policy and we operate, if we're deployed OCONUS, we operate under a local Commander's or local theater Rules of Engagement. It does, as you implied, it does get complicated to deploy within the United States. We're not the first to do that. I believe there was a unit on the West Coast that deployed to Seattle for the . . .

**Q:** The World Trade meetings I think.

**LCDR Handford:** Yes, that's correct, the World Trade meetings.

**Q:** I was just up there last week and that was one of the issues that came up, was having small boats that could fire four miles sitting around Puget Sound.

**LCDR Handford:** That's correct. Our boat crew's train on clearing fields of fire and ensuring that, to the maximum extent possible, we don't have friendlies behind a target. That's not always possible to do, obviously, and the problem is, is that we are designed as a war-fighting force. I wouldn't say the friendly fire concerns are nonexistent in a foreign harbor, but in a wartime environment they're probably going to be completely different.

**Q:** Sure.

**LCDR Handford:** The priority will be protecting a U.S. high value asset and really the local friendly fire casualties may be a secondary concern.

But to go back to answering your question some more; there were discussions in New York, . . . even when we worked with the Navy, for example, in Bright Star, there were frequently disagreements over what we feel is safe and prudent and what the Navy feels is safe or prudent, or if we go to New York, you know, what Activities New York feels is safe or prudent. For example, with the Navy, the Navy does not trust loaded weapons to their people and the Coast Guard, of course, has a standard way of carrying the 9 millimeter Personal Defense Firearm in a loaded and off-safe condition, and the Navy frequently is horrified to hear that. So we usually have a lot of discussions regarding those issues.

**Q:** Well with the [USS] *Cole* [DDG-67] and what not, was there much discussion within the unit before 9/11 - that you're obviously involved in Port Security, Force Protection and so forth - about this kind of

new enemy that would use friendly assets, or seemingly friendly assets; you know, a cabin cruiser coming across the harbor or those sorts of things, to try to take out a Navy ship?

**LCDR Handford:** Well in a sense I guess the answer to that is yes and no. In a sense we've always prepared for that because our Rules of Engagement call for deadly fire against a non-hostile threat that does not comply with our orders.

**Q:** And that's a transgression of a security zone and that sort of thing.

**LCDR Handford:** Correct. So to apply that to the *Cole*; if we had been under our standard Rules of Engagement and we had been protecting the *Cole* as a high value asset, that vessel would not have not gotten close enough to do what it did. Barring, obviously, you know, if they had . . . if it was a cleared vessel . . .

**Q:** Subterfuge or something like that.

**LCDR Handford:** Subterfuge. There were certainly - I don't remember the details now - but I recall vaguely that there was some talk that this was a refueling barge or a vessel that had been used previously that day to nudge the *Cole* in place or something like that. Certainly you can sort of imagine different scenarios. One thing I can say is that if it was not authorized to come close to the *Cole* at the time that it came close to the *Cole*, then we would have prevented it from getting close to the *Cole*. And under our ROE we would have taken it under deadly fire before it got close enough to do the damage it did.

**Q:** Any incidents stand out in your mind from your time in New York more than others looking back on it now with some hindsight; things that the unit did well, things it would have done differently or things it would have liked to have had, those sorts of things?

**LCDR Handford:** Well a couple things come to mind. Our tent city worked out very well. We received some assistance that greatly improved our quality of life and crew rest. For example, we received a laundry trailer; a 40-foot trailer, set up with washers and dryers.

**Q:** That's heaven, yeah.

**LCDR Handford:** It parked right next to our tent city. We also received an experimental Army shower unit that had recently . . . I'm not sure if it was experimental or had recently been refurbished, or a new type or something like that, but from some connection we were able to have a shower set up right next to our tent city. We've seen similar units before. We had one in Camp Lejeune; a much earlier model. It was not as nice. This was, like I said, a brand new or experimental model of a shower trailer unit, and it was a military; an Army unit, and that just did wonders for morale.

**Q:** Sure.

**LCDR Handford:** At the time, Activities New York billeting was full up. They really couldn't handle us coming in and using the heads. So we also got, gosh, there must have been 25 Porta-Johns set up for our heads and they were cleaned frequently. Messing turned out to be quite adequate out of the Activities New York galley. One of the things that stick out is that the location of our boat docks was a good 30 to 45-minute drive.

**Q:** And where did you end up locating the boats?

**LCDR Handford:** The boats were at MOT-B.

**Q:** Oh yeah, right.

**LCDR Handford:** At Bayonne there.

**Q:** And so how did you get across there? Did you drive across or did you take boats over?

**LCDR Handford:** We drove. Occasionally we would use the station next to Activities New York for various things.

**Q:** Did you do your maintenance there at MOT-B as well?

**LCDR Handford:** The maintenance was done at MOT-B as well, that's correct. We had our boats and ISU-90's over there.

**Q:** What are those?

**LCDR Handford:** The ISU-90s are - what would you call them - they're containers. They're smaller containers. They're not 20-foot containers. I believe they're 8x8 containers . . .

**Q:** Like shop units?

**LCDR Handford:** . . . with opening doors on both sides, and we can certainly get you pictures of those. They can be set up with different configurations inside. But we're really set up to bring our ISU-90s, open the doors, and operate out of them if we have to.

**Q:** Right.

**LCDR Handford:** And you'll see that our engineering down here has set up rows of them facing each other with some protection in between them, and we operate out of them there. We did the same thing at Activities New York . . . that most of the ISU-90s were, well some were moved to MOT-B to operate out of and then some remained back at Activities New York.

There were some interesting "Field Expedient" issues. For example, we ended up putting our armory inside a handball court; a fenced handball court, so it made the security of our armory a much easier thing to accomplish. We had a crane there and just dropped the armory inside, and the gunner's mates lived in there and they had a fence with a gate.

**Q:** You had a self-contained armory container that you carried with you?

**LCDR Handford:** That's correct. So things like that turned out to work really well. The distance between berthing and MOT-B contributed to crew fatigue issues and the distance between MOT-B to Manhattan was also a . . . I believe it was considered about a half-hour transit.

New York Harbor is very rough. It's always very rough; confused seas, and the boats and the personnel took quite a pounding every time they went up and came back. And of course the weather started to turn cold later in the deployment. It's the kind of thing that, you know, we were okay for 30-days. We were there about 45 I guess, if I remember correctly. If it was much longer we would have run into some, I think we would have run into some crew fatigue; significant crew fatigue issues. It's one of the things . . . you know the PSU Watch, Quarter and Station Bill is set up to do three section indefinitely, and that's 8-hours on and 16-hours off. That is a grueling pace, to say the least, by itself. But when you add things like the crews have to receive watch briefs and debriefs - they have to be transported to the boats - you know their 8-hour watch turns into a 10-hour watch.

**Q:** Sure.

**LCDR Handford:** And up there it was turning into a 12-hour watch because of having to get up on station. We started having to juggle things to try and make things happen; to try and maintain the coverage while not necessarily maintaining your standard SOP [Standard Operating Procedures].

**Q:** Right.

**LCDR Handford:** And I don't know if you want to get into it but we also have done the same thing down here. We've altered how the watches are done so that we can maintain this pace for a long period of time.

**Q:** So you were there until about the end of October there a bouts?

**LCDR Handford:** It was around the last week of October I think we returned. I couldn't tell you offhand without looking at a calendar.

**Q:** Did you have an indication that you were going to be mobilized again, or when did you get an indication that you were going to be mobilized again?

**LCDR Handford:** Well we knew that we were slated to be mobilized to Southwest Asia for a rotation that had already started, of PSU Detachments in Bahrain. The next detachment reported in October, were due to rotate in March, and we were due to provide the next detachment. So at the time we were looking at what we thought was a fairly - well I should say in December - we were looking at what we thought was a fairly sure deployment.

**Q:** Do you remember what that rotation was? Was it a six-month rotation?

**LCDR Handford:** Yes, a six-month rotation.

**Q:** It was, okay.

**LCDR Handford:** So we were looking at sending our Boats' Division over for six-months starting in March or April. The next news we got was, subsequent to, I guess, [Secretary of Defense] Mr. [Donald] Rumsfeld's announcement that Guantanamo Bay was going to become a holding facility, we started receiving telephone - I don't know if it was telephone calls or e-mails - contact from Commander Daniels at LANTAREA who indicated that he had begun attending planning meetings to support that.

**Q:** Right.

**LCDR Handford:** So we were starting to get inklings that we would be sent here or at least involved in this mission. And on January 11th, around 1700 or so I believe, we actually received the Deployment Order.

**Q:** Right.

**LCDR Handford:** But we had about, probably about a week's notice where people were saying, its happening, its happening. We're not sure exactly when; maybe this week, maybe next week, maybe the week after. But that we're intending to send a PSU to Guantanamo and you're going to be it.

**Q:** Did this present any special challenges for you, especially in relation to New York, to get the unit down here as opposed to there?

**LCDR Handford:** I would say no and actually I would say it improved our - the fact that we had deployed to New York - improved our load out because we had just done it.

**Q:** Yeah, everything was fresh in your mind.

**LCDR Handford:** Things were fresh in our mind. People knew what they needed and what they didn't need.

**Q:** Was this considered a separate and distinct mobilization from New York, or were you demobilized from New York?

**LCDR Handford:** Yes, we were completely demobilized and what they call RELADed, which is Released from Active Duty from Orders. When we went from the Title 14 to the Title 10 orders, the Title 10 orders came in as 12-month orders.

**Q:** Okay.

**LCDR Handford:** And things really happened very fast. We expected, okay, we might be in New York for a year, and by the way, Activities New York, you know we have fiberglass hull boats and when you start getting ice up here we're not going to be able to do anything.

**Q:** Right.

**LCDR Handford:** And when we started talking about those things the decision was made for us to redeploy from New York fairly rapidly; maybe only a week or two before we left.

**Q:** Does the Coast Guard have the ability to do port security in ice? I mean do we have a way to do that?

**LCDR Handford:** Not that I know of.

**Q:** Just one of those trivia questions that, you know, if somebody wants to attack, do it when the harbor's frozen over.

**LCDR Handford:** That's right. If you sat down and thought about it, I think, if the harbors frozen over your vulnerabilities would be significantly different. You know we train to counteract fast movers, swimmers, divers, you know, those types of things.

**Q:** Also too, I think, that when the discussions are about the next shoe dropping it sort of centers around somebody bringing a ship in with a dirty bomb on it or something like that; just a totally different kind of threat.

**LCDR Handford:** Exactly. And the thing that has to be remembered is that we're termed a port security unit but we, by no means, are able to counter every threat that a port may experience.

**Q:** So are you still under those same orders or were you cut new sets of orders to come here?

**LCDR Handford:** We were cut new sets of orders to come here. We were released from active duty off those 12-month orders. Our actual release date varied because of the amount of leave people had or people took, or sold leave at the end of their active duty. So right around November 3rd, 4th and 5th were the final days of active duty for most people. We had a couple of our personnel who contacted MSO Hampton Roads and continued on active duty. Well they either continued on active duty or they were released and cut another set of orders to go over to MSO Hampton Roads; remained on active duty with them with the agreement that they would deploy with us if we were called up again, and as it turned out we were called up again, and they did deploy with us. But we were, as far as the January 11th orders, we were cut a new set of Title 10 orders. They were initially cut for 179 days. This created a bit of confusion. The original operations order down here envisioned security forces on a 90-day rotation and all others; staff, etc., on a 179-day rotation. And with my active duty background I can tell you the reason for that is that TAD [Temporary Additional Duty] or TDY [Temporary Duty] orders can only be cut for 179 days barring special dispensation from SECDEF [Secretary of Defense] or however high you have to go. The theory is, I guess, that if you're there for more than 179 days you should

receive PCS orders and then things get complicated. So it was not surprising to find out that here they expected personnel to be here no more than 179 days and that they would put that out. The problem is we received 179 day active duty orders, which means that there are some active duty benefits that we would not receive and it also means that our deployment would have to be shorter than that because we'd have to come back and RELAD and so forth.

**Q:** Sure.

**LCDR Handford:** So once we brought all these things to the attention of LANTAREA they authorized an extension of our active duty orders to 12-months and that was carried out after a lot of gnashing of teeth and trying to decide how to do it. Then we received a set of TAD orders to actually come down here to Guantanamo and those were 179 days orders.

**Q:** Right.

**LCDR Handford:** So it sort of, you know, you sort of have to get your personnel thing; the administrative concepts straight, and they did not have those straight at first but eventually it was straightened out.

**Q:** Well this has been a learning experience on so many fronts and that's certainly been one of them, is that everybody knows Title 10 and Title 14.

**LCDR Handford:** That's right. The other thing is from my time on active duty I can tell you that there is a decided lack of institutional knowledge in the Coast Guard regarding overseas deployment issues and overseas travel issues . . .

**Q:** And domestic deployment issues.

**LCDR Handford:** Well even domestic deployments. But you know a lot of these things they just seem to reinvent the wheel.

**Q:** Also, well they're almost forced to in this situation because they got rid of the Reserve units ten years ago and they had no Reserve unit administration structure to handle a mobilization like this.

**LCDR Handford:** Right.

**Q:** And the latest I've heard at Headquarters is they want to go to 17,500 Reservists. You know you're going to have to build up an entirely new support structure for that many people and they don't have it.

**LCDR Handford:** True.

**Q:** Well you got down here . . . you're kind of in a unique situation because you responded to New York and now you're responding to the people who were associates of the people who attacked New York. That must have been a little bit strange?

**LCDR Handford:** Well it was. I mean the good thing about it was the focus of the mission was something everybody could identify with.

**Q:** Right. What's your liaison been like with this whole structure down here?

**LCDR Handford:** It's been interesting. When we initially came down here the JTF [Joint Task Force] was JTF-160 that we were attached to, which was primarily Marines. They were deployed from Camp Lejeune and they're designed to do this; to deploy quickly and to do this type of thing. Some of the initial units that were brought in to actually guard the detainees were Army National Guard MP units. Actually one of them had been called to the Pentagon so they'd been on virtually straight active duty

since September 11th; first the Pentagon and then brought down here. ComNavBase [Command Naval base] Guantanamo Bay has historically hosted Ramp-Ups similar to this in the past. For example, the '94/'95 Haitian Exodus and so forth they had 30,000 Haitians living on the base. They were, you know . . . for a naval base we were very gratified to find that they were very flexible, very helpful, very eager to please, and we also found the Marines to be very good to work with.

**Q:** Right.

**LCDR Handford:** And we developed a very close working relationship with ComNavBase and with the Marine JTF leadership. And then they left. The Marines left and essentially the Army took over JTF-160. An Army National Guard Brigadier General from Rhode Island became JTF-160 and there was a wholesale change out of the JTF Staff. And the - how shall I put it - the character of that change was dramatic because the relief was designed to be very orderly and there was a turnover period designed into it where the new personnel would come in and shadow the existing personnel for two days and the new personnel would live in the hangar down at the old airfield, and then on the third day you'd do a swap out. The new people would go into position, do the job, and then the fourth and the fifth days the existing person would be moving out and helping with any carry-on details. What happened in practice was that the Army came in and essentially told the Marines that they weren't interested in a turnover and they'll do it their way, and you can go anytime you want. So there were a lot wheels reinvented.

**Q:** It was a shock, huh?

**LCDR Handford:** Yeah, it was a bit of a shock. We did not get a very good familiarization turnover; in other words an introduction from the previous people to the new people.

**Q:** Right.

**LCDR Handford:** It was the kind of thing where all of a sudden there was a new person in the office we had been dealing with and this new person had different ideas about how everything was supposed to be done. As it turned out the Army does some things better than the Marines and vice versa. For example, the Army Sergeant Major that came in; the Command Sergeant Major, was very proactive and she started having weekly meetings with the senior NCOs [Non-Commissioned Officers]. Very proactive in berthing issues, messing issues and that sort of thing, and that was a good thing.

**Q:** Yeah.

**LCDR Handford:** She was sort of in it for the long haul, whereas the Marines were definitely here to get the job done and get out of here and were less interested in some long haul issues you might say.

**Q:** Now that you've had some perspective on the last six or eight months and you're getting ready to go home, how do you view this in terms of your career in the Coast Guard, in terms of the history of the unit and all the rest? Do you see this as a significant turning point in port security or do you feel like your relative pre-9/11 unanimity in the Coast Guard, if you want to put it that way, is changing?

**LCDR Handford:** Well I think it's possible that it is. We did get a lot of press initially when we came down. A lot of people have had a lot of things going on this year and I don't know really how much of that exposure will really result in a better knowledge of our mission and so forth. It certainly has been a momentous year for port security units. The Coast Guard leadership has said repeatedly this year that we're going to be in the forefront; the PSUs are going to be in the forefront. There's a lot for us to do. But this year also brought up the weaknesses in what I feel are particular weaknesses that really stem from the port security units being Reserve units.

**Q:** Right.

**LCDR Handford:** Personally I think the trend now is where the new Maritime Security Teams [MSST: Maritime Safety and Security Teams] will be primarily active duty units based in the United States with

port security units retaining the OCONUS mission and the deployable mission. Personally I think the Coast Guard's got it backwards. Over the years the port security units have gradually begun to self-select for certain types of civilians; state employees, federal employees, law enforcement and firefighters because they're the ones that can take the extra drills that we get. You know we get 64. The last few years we have gotten 64 drills per year to use, not to mention the extra deployments. Even before September 11th we - and I didn't mention this earlier - but we did do additional training; additional exercises. We would have people go on ADSW [Active Duty Special Work] and do different things. Frequently we're asked to provide setups for Public Affairs events because everybody loves the, you know, it's easy for the Coast Guard to send a small boat and a couple of guys rather than . . .

**Q:** Rather than a helicopter or cutter.

**LCDR Handford:** Right, exactly, which is fine. But the time commitment before September 11th was significant.

**Q:** Right.

**LCDR Handford:** And we were starting to lose people who were in private civilian employment. You know their employers just wouldn't put up with it.

**Q:** Have those kinds of problems been exacerbated?

**LCDR Handford:** Yes they have. And they're talking . . . well if you want to use an example. There are a lot of things going on - and this may not be a completely accurate projection - but there's talk, for example, if this continued at Guantanamo or if the Southwest Asia mission continued, that you'd have six-month rotations of PSUs. There's only six PSUs in the country and if you're telling me that I'm going to do six-months now and then another six-months within a year or two, I'm just not going to be here because I can't. My civilian career can't survive that.

**Q:** To say nothing of your family life.

**LCDR Handford:** Well the family life, that's everyone's personal decision. I mean certainly the Navy has addressed that with their ship deployments where they do six month deployments.

**Q:** Yeah, I think that's true. But I think at least in the Reserve context - I was talking about this with a lieutenant commander at Headquarters - is that in this new environment most people sign up for the Reserves by where under law you only have, I guess what, two 30 day deployments in four years. But in this situation when they go to Title 10 they basically own you for wherever they want to send for however long they want to send you.

**LCDR Handford:** Exactly.

**Q:** And, you know, if these people wanted to be on active duty they would have joined active duty. They're in the Reserves for a purpose.

**LCDR Handford:** That's right, and it's a double whammy for them. I mean its one thing to be on active duty and to have people deploying around you all the time. You know, for example, in the Navy, I mean this ship deploys, that ship deploys. You know, you're going to deploy in a certain amount of time. You know many people who live on base. They have a support system.

**Q:** But here you have no preparation for it. You don't know when it's going to happen.

**LCDR Handford:** Right.

**Q:** Was there any, to your knowledge, were the port security units consulted during the construction of the MSSTs over this whole issue of who would guard what ports and where?

**LCDR Handford:** Not that I know of. I guess I didn't quite finish the thought. The idea for me would be that it makes sense for Reservists to do the CONUS mission.

**Q:** Sure.

**LCDR Handford:** And it makes sense for the OCONUS missions to be done by active duty. And there's nothing wrong - I mean all the other Services do it - there's nothing wrong with standing up a PSU in Bahrain. You know the Navy's got a lot of people over there PCS [Permanent Change of Station].

**Q:** Well of course when I joined the Reserves in 1988 that was our mission. I was in MSO Providence and the Reserve's mission was to guard the port of Providence in time of a loadout for general war in Europe.

**LCDR Handford:** Right, and a lot of the other Services - and I'll have to admit that other Services are struggling with this - the theory has always been, when you have a major deployment need; a major operation, the active duty goes and then the Reserve backfills. It's not the other way around.

**Q:** Well yeah, and then that's the way it is for us; when we're called in we backfill for, say, PAs [Public Affairs Specialists] that are sent someplace.

**LCDR Handford:** Right.

**Q:** Well they don't send us and keep the PAs there. They send their professionals who are there every day to do that stuff. And it also makes sense that you would have more of an infinity and more knowledge to guard a port in your own area where you live then one-half way around the world.

**LCDR Handford:** That's right.

**Q:** It seems one of those blindly obvious things that nobody's thought about, but I'm sure that's occurred to you guys more than once. (Laughter) Well I'll bring that up when I go back to Headquarters and find out who stood up the MSSTs and whether this issue was ever brought up because it doesn't seem to make any sense. Of course it never did make any sense, and it almost seemed like the PSUs were stood up to get a group of PSUs on the cheap and, oh, let the Reserves do it since we'll never have another Desert Storm; that kind of thinking.

**LCDR Handford:** Well I think that's what it is.

**Q:** Of course we're going to have a Desert Storm every three months now it looks like.

**LCDR Handford:** Right, and my guess is it's a monetary issue.

**Q:** Sure. They don't want to pay people to do something, they think might be a part-time job, full time.

**LCDR Handford:** Right, but it seemed to me that the . . . and then there are other, you know, there are political issues that come into play as well.

**Q:** Sure.

**LCDR Handford:** You know, is the Navy going to take over this mission OCONUS as a full time job? And then we would be surge capacity. And I guess maybe that's the thought. Maybe that's the theory, is that in the future we wouldn't have to deploy for six months. We would deploy for surge requirements

and the Navy would have their own small port security units that either traveled with the ships or in the ports that they need them in. And I suppose if you look at it that way that's fine, as long as it pans out that way.

**Q:** Sure. Do you have any final thoughts Sir; things you've experienced, anything you want to share that we haven't covered?

**LCDR Handford:** Well I guess I just would like to say that given the complaining that I just did about how they're . . .

**Q:** That's why we're here Sir. (Laughter)

**LCDR Handford:** That's right. I'll have to say that the vast majority of personnel in the Port Security Unit have just stepped up to the plate without complaint, and, you know, a lot of people sort of, with wishful thinking, thought, well, you know, PSUs only deploy 30-days at a time etc, etc. And it seemed - incredible as it sounds to me being previously on active duty - their surprise was genuine that they would actually be called up for a long period of time. I kind of always figured that if the balloon really goes up; if something really happens, you could go away for a couple of years just like everybody in any major war has done. But given all that they really stepped up to the plate and they've done a great job here, and I'm just really proud of them; 99-percent of them. (Laughter)

**Q:** Well thank you Sir.

**LCDR Handford:** Thank you Chief.

**END OF INTERVIEW**

