

the 20th anniversary of 9/11

COLONEL Peter M. Kujawski

A Senior Military Man in Charge



I was a senior U.S. Army Officer assigned to support the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), Region One's response on 9/11/2001. After the World Trade Center (WTC) was attacked, I was ordered to report immediately and directly to the FEMA Region One Regional Operation Center known as the "bunker" in Maynard, MA. My orders were simple: "You will be the senior military man in charge, take charge."

I joined up with Lieutenant Colonel Brian Dubie and the rest of the military and FEMA civilian staff. Before he worked as the

Air Force liaison, American Airlines pilot Brian Dubie's first job that day was to tell Mrs. Ogonowski that her husband, American Airlines Pilot John was killed by the terrorists on Flight 11 and was not coming home any longer. Brian was the epitome of courage under extreme stress.

All 27 of the federal agencies under the Federal Response Plan were in that bunker bringing every resource known to help respond to this terrible tragedy. The U.S. military joint staff manned the Department of Defense (DoD) desk in the ROC. We managed all of the tasks assigned to DoD by FEMA in the first four days of the disaster 24/7 until FEMA Region II (NY/NJ) was reconstituted in NJ. Why? Because FEMA Region II's ROC was destroyed by the collapse of the Twin Towers.

All of our God-given operational skills and emergency response experience were put to the test during that 96-hour period. Our team came together to help our nation begin to work through this crisis at a crucial time. We were responsible for managing requests for body bags, heavy-lift helicopters, air support, the USNS Comfort ship, and many other tasks the Department of Defense had to supply for the WTC response. Without that unity, we would not have been as effective at supporting our civilian counterparts during this man-made disaster.

Those of us who were alive on 9/11 will always remember where we were that day. More importantly, perhaps we also remember how the entire country came together as one after the multiple attacks on our country. We can use this anniversary as a refresher on how our country can come together to each of those who don't remember or weren't alive and how important it was to begin to heal a country.

Peter M. Kujawski
Colonel, U.S. Army (ret.)



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An advertisement for Nate's Outdoor Services. It features a photograph of a person using a leaf blower to clear a path of fallen autumn leaves. The text "Transform Your Outdoor Living Space!" is written in a stylized font over the image. Below the image, it says "Schedule your Fall Clean Up!"

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