



News Release

UNITED STATES AIR FORCE

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WTC TRAGEDY HITS CLOSE TO HOME

CHARLESTON AIR FORCE BASE, S.C. – While most people at Charleston AFB watched the World Trade Center collapse on TV, a military working dog handler with the 437th Security Forces Squadron, experienced the horror first hand.

Staff Sgt. Scott Shafer recalled the horrific events.

“I was in Bldg. 7 of the World Trade Center for a meeting when I heard the first explosion,” Shafer said. “I started to run out of the building and had just gotten out when I heard the second one.”

Shafer, who was TDY to New York as part of an assignment with the secret service, said he probably would have been killed by falling debris had he not run when he did.

“I thought it was a bomb so my first reaction was to get back to my hotel and get my dog so I could help,” he said.

Binky, an explosive sniffing dog, was left behind while Shafer attended the meeting, which was to determine his work schedule and responsibilities for the duration of the TDY.

Air Mobility Command tasked Shafer for this trip, because of a partnership with the secret service. He and Binky were assigned to New York to help with security for a United Nations conference.

Shafer and a secret service agent picked up their dogs from the hotel and headed back toward the WTC.

"It was like swimming upstream," he said, referring to the mass of people running the opposite direction.

Shafer and the agent were not allowed back toward the explosion, so they met up with other secret service agents at a nearby school where they helped evacuate students to safety.

As things started to unfold, Shafer said he was prepared for anything.

"You just fall back on your training and go," he said. "I was ready to help in any way I could."

Though he has yet to be called in to help, he said he remains reachable by a beeper until he's told what to do next. He's not sure if they're going to keep him in New York to assist with the recovery efforts or send him back to Charleston.

Shafer's wife, Beth, is hoping for the latter.

"I will not relax completely until he his home safe," she said.

Either way, he said life would never be the same for him. Shafer is haunted by the images of falling debris and people jumping from WTC windows to their death.

"What you see on TV isn't even close," he said. "I've never seen anything like it before and it's something you just don't forget."

(For more information, contact Master Sgt. Dan Murphy at 963-5582 or Staff Sgt. Pamela Smith at 963-5589)