

# SEPTEMBER 11<sup>th</sup>

19 militants associated with the Islamic extremist group al-Qaeda hijacked four airliners and carried out suicide attacks against targets in the United States on September 11th, 2001. Two of the planes were flown into the towers of the World Trade Center in New York City. A third plane hit the Pentagon right outside of Washington, D.C. The fourth plane crashed in a field in Pennsylvania. The day is often referred to as 9/11. It was a day resulting in extensive death and destruction and triggered major U.S. initiatives to combat terrorism. The day also defined the presidency of George W. Bush. Over 3,000 people were killed during the attacks in New York City and Washington, D.C. More than 400 of these were police officers and firefighters.

## First Attack

At 8:45 a.m. on a clear September Tuesday morning, an American Airlines Boeing 767 with 92 people and loaded with 20,000 gallons of jet fuel crashed into the north tower of the World Trade Center in New York City. The impact left a huge, burning hole near the 80th floor of the 110-story skyscraper. Hundreds of people were killed instantly and the people on the floors above were left trapped. People began evacuating the north tower, as well as its twin tower. Television cameras started to broadcast the live images of what initially seemed to be a freak accident.

## Second Attack

18 minutes after the first plane hit, a second Boeing 767, United Airlines Flight 175, appeared and turned sharply toward the World Trade Center, slicing the tower near the 60th floor. This collision caused a massive explosion, showering burning debris over surrounding buildings and the streets below. America was under attack.

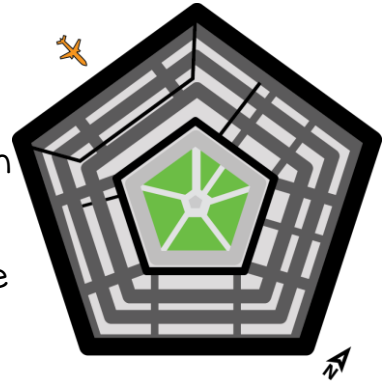


## The Attackers

The attackers were revealed as Islamic terrorists from Saudi Arabia and other Arab nations reportedly financed by the Saudi fugitive, Osama bin Laden's al-Qaeda terrorist organization. Allegedly, they were acting in retaliation for America's support of Israel, U.S. involvement in the Persian Gulf War, and its continued military presence in the Middle East. Some of the terrorists lived in the United States for more than a year and had taken flying lessons at American commercial flight schools. Other terrorists had slipped into the United States months before September 11th to act as the "muscle" of the operation. The 19 terrorists were easily able to smuggle boxcutters and knives through security at three East Coast airports and board four flights bound for California. These flights were chosen because the planes were loaded with fuel for the long transcontinental journey. Soon after takeoff, the terrorists commandeered the four planes, taking control, transforming ordinary commuter jets into guided missiles.

## Third Attack

While millions watched the events unfold in New York, American Airlines Flight 77 circled over downtown Washington, D.C. and slammed into the west side of the Pentagon military headquarters at 9:45 a.m. Jet fuel from the plane caused a devastating inferno that led to the structural collapse of a portion of the giant concrete building. 125 military personnel and civilians were killed in the Pentagon, along with all 64 people aboard the plane.



## Catastrophe

Less than 15 minutes after terrorists struck the Pentagon, the horror in New York City took a catastrophic turn for the worse when the south tower of the World Trade Center collapsed in a massive cloud of dust and smoke. The structural steel of the skyscraper was built to withstand in excess of 200 miles per hour and a large conventional fire, but was unable to withstand the tremendous heat generated by the burning jet fuel. At 10:30 a.m. the other Trade Center tower collapsed. Almost 3,000 people died in the World Trade Center and its vicinity, including a staggering 343 firefighters and paramedics, 23 New York City police officers, and 37 Port Authority police officers. They were all trying to help evacuate the buildings and save the office workers trapped on higher floors. Only 6 people who were in the towers at the time of the collapse survived. About 10,000 other people were treated for injuries, many of which were severe. Fires at the World Trade Center smoldered for more than three months.



## Flight 93

Meanwhile, a fourth California-bound plane United Flight 93- was hijacked about 40 minutes after, leaving Newark International Airport in New Jersey. This plane was delayed in taking off, so passengers had learned of the events in New York and Washington through cell phone and Airfone calls. They knew their plane was not going to return to the airport as the hijackers claimed, so a group of passengers and flight attendants planned an uprising. One passenger, Thomas Burnett Jr., told his wife over the phone, "I know we're all going to die. There's three of us who are going to do something about it. I love you, honey." Another passenger, Todd Beamer, was heard saying "Are you guys ready? Let's roll" over an open line. Sandy Bradshaw, a flight attendant, called her husband and explained she had slipped into the galley and was filling pitchers with boiling water. Her final words to him were, "Everyone's running to first class. I've got to go. Bye." Passengers fought the four hijackers and likely attacked the cockpit with a fire extinguisher. The plane flipped over and sped toward the ground at upwards of 500 miles per hour, crashing into a rural field in western Pennsylvania at 10:10 a.m. All 45 people aboard were killed. The planes intended target is unknown, but theories include the White House, U.S. Capitol, the Camp David presidential retreat in Maryland, or one of several nuclear power plants along the eastern seaboard.

## President Bush

President George W. Bush spent the day being shuttled around the country due to security concerns. He returned to the White House at 7 p.m. where he delivered a televised address from the Oval Office at 9 p.m. saying, "Terrorist attacks can shake the foundation of our biggest buildings, but they cannot touch the foundation of America. These acts shatter steel, but they cannot dent the steel of American resolve."



## Fighting Back

An American-led international effort to oust the Taliban regime in Afghanistan and destroy Osama bin Laden's terrorist network was named Operation Enduring Freedom. It began on October 7th, 2001 and within two months U.S. forces had effectively removed the Taliban from operational power. The war continued as U.S. coalition forces attempted to defeat a Taliban insurgency campaign based in

Pakistan. Osama bin Laden, the mastermind behind the September 11th attacks, remained at large until May 2, 2011 when he was tracked down and killed by U.S. forces at a hideout in Abbottabad, Pakistan. President Barack Obama announced the beginning of large-scale troop withdrawals from Afghanistan in June 2011. U.S. troops remain in Afghanistan to this day.

## Impact

September 11, 2001 is a day that stands out in the minds of many Americans since the nation had not been majorly attacked on its own soil since the Pearl Harbor attack in 1941. The victims of 9/11

ranged in age from two to 85 years. About 75-80 percent of the victims were male. As of September 2015, 1,640 of the 2,753 World Trade Center victims' remains had been positively identified. September 11, known as Patriot's Day, continues to be honored and victims are remembered.



## Economic Impact

- \$500,000- Estimated amount of money it cost to plan and execute the 9/11 attacks
- \$123 billion- Estimated economic loss during the first 2-4 weeks after the World Trade Center towers collapsed in New York City, as well as decline in airline travel over the next few years
- \$60 billion- Estimated cost of WTC site damage, including damage to surrounding buildings, infrastructure, and subway facilities
- \$40 billion- Value of the emergency anti-terrorism package approved by the U.S. Congress on September 14th, 2001.
- \$15 billion- Aid package passed by Congress to bail out the airlines
- \$9.3 billion- Insurance claims arising from the 9/11 attacks
- \$750 million- Total cost of cleanup of Ground Zero in New York City