

September 11 Attacks



The Twin Towers During the Attack
Source: National Park Service

On September 11, 2001 the United States was attacked by an Islamic terrorist group called al-Qaeda. They hijacked four passenger planes and used them as weapons to crash into buildings. Two of the planes crashed into the Twin Towers in New York City while another plane hit the Pentagon. The fourth plane crashed in Shanksville, Pennsylvania after the passengers attempted to retake control of the plane.

The Attacks

It was early in the morning on September 11 when the hijackers took control of the four airplanes. At the time, no one dreamed of their intentions. Here is what happened to each flight in the order that they crashed:

- 8:46 AM: American Airlines Flight 11 from Boston crashes into the North Tower of the World Trade Center in New York City.
- 9:03 AM: United Airlines Flight 175 from Boston crashed into the South Tower at 9:03 AM.
- 9:37 AM: American Airlines Flight 77 from Dulles Airport in Washington, D.C. crashes into the Pentagon.
- 10:03 AM: United Airlines Flight 93 from Newark, New Jersey crashes into a field near Shanksville, Pennsylvania when the passengers attempt to take control. Authorities believe the terrorists' target was the White House or the U.S. Capitol Building.

When the first plane hit the North Tower, many people thought it was some sort of horrible accident. When the second plane hit, we knew we were under attack.

The Twin Towers Collapse

The airplane fuel on board the passenger planes caused an intense fire and extreme heat in the Twin Towers. Eventually, the structural integrity of both buildings gave way and the towers collapsed. The South Tower collapsed first followed by the North Tower around a 1/2 hour later. Several other buildings and skyscrapers around the Twin Towers collapsed as well.

How many people died?

The death toll from the attacks was devastating. All 246 passengers and crew on the four airplanes died along with 2,606 people at the World Trade Center and 125 at the Pentagon. In all, 2,996 people were killed by the terrorist attacks.



September 11 National Memorial
Photo by Ducksters

9/11 Heroes

There are many stories of heroes on the ground and in the air during the attacks. The firefighters and police of New York City worked diligently to save thousands of people before the buildings collapsed. Many of them gave their lives including 343 firefighters, 72 police, and 55 military personnel. The passengers aboard Flight 93 also fought back to gain control of the plane. They knew they were probably going to die, but they didn't let the plane crash into a building where more would die. We will never know just how many lives their bravery saved.

Who were the attackers?

There were 19 terrorists involved in the hijackings. They were members of the Islamic terrorist group al-Qaeda led by Osama bin Laden.

Aftermath

The effects from the attacks were felt for many years. The U.S. economy struggled as the stock market crashed. Things were even worse in New York City which had to deal with the dust, debris, and destruction of so many buildings. Many had to deal with the death of friends and loved-ones and the loss of jobs and businesses.

The United States government, led by [President George W. Bush](#), retaliated with a "War on Terror." The U.S. attacked the [Taliban in Afghanistan](#) and searched out leaders and members

of al-Qaeda. Osama bin Laden was able to hide out in mountain caves for many years before he was finally hunted down and killed in 2011.



One World Trade Center Building
Photo by Ducksters

Memorials

There are memorials to the victims at each of the three locations of the attacks. There is the National September 11 Memorial and Museum at the World Trade Center in New York City, the Pentagon Memorial in Virginia, and the Flight 93 National Memorial in Pennsylvania.

Interesting Facts About the September 11 Attacks

- The Department of Homeland Security was formed and the Patriot Act passed after the attacks in order to help fight terrorism.
- Around 50,000 people had jobs in the Twin Towers before the attacks.
- All four flights were headed across the country to California. This was part of the terrorists' plans so that the planes would be filled with fuel for a long flight.
- The passengers aboard the planes used cell phones to relay details of the hijackers.
- President Bush said after the attacks that "We will not waver; we will not falter, and we will not fail. Peace and freedom will prevail."