

9/11: Who What When Where Why

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Pre-Reading

SHARE WHAT YOU KNOW about 9-11. What happened that day?

REVIEW THIS VOCABULARY: hijack/hijacker; terrorist (see “What is Terrorism?” on pp. 52-53); extremist; suicide; weapons of mass destruction.

A Deadly Suicide Mission

On September 11, 2001, 19 hijackers boarded four planes. Their plan was to turn these commercial planes, which were filled with fuel, into giant bombs. The hijackers were mostly from Saudi Arabia. They were members of Al Qaeda, a global terrorist organization.

Flights #11 and #175 Destroy the World Trade Center and Kill Thousands

Two flights departed from Boston. The hijackers on these flights took control of the planes and flew them into the Twin Towers of the World Trade Center. Almost 3000 people were killed, including passengers on the flight, people who were at work in the World Trade Center, and others who were on the ground. A short time after the planes hit the



The World Trade Center



The Pentagon

towers, both towers collapsed. Many firefighters and emergency workers lost their lives trying to rescue people from the building.

Flight #77 Damages the Pentagon and Kills Almost 200

One flight took off from Dulles Airport in Virginia. The hijackers crashed this plane into the Pentagon. Almost 200 people died.

Flight #93 Crashes in a Field, Killing Everyone on Board

The last hijacked flight to take off on the morning of September 11 departed from New Jersey.



A field in Pennsylvania

The passengers on this flight called their relatives and friends to tell them about the hijacking. They found out that three other planes had been hijacked on the same day and that the hijackers had purposely crashed them into important buildings. The passengers on Flight #93 fought to get control of the aircraft. They succeeded. They prevented the hijackers from crashing the plane into the Capitol Building or the White House, one of which was probably their target. The plane crashed in a field in Pennsylvania; 37 passengers, 7 crew members, and 4 hijackers died. (Read more about Flight 93 on p. 19.)

Global Outpouring of Sympathy

At the time of 9/11, the United States had not experienced an attack inside its borders since the early 1800s. It was a huge shock for Americans. People all over the country and many parts of the world showed their sympathy to the victims.

Why Did Al Qaeda Attack the United States?

After these horrifying attacks, many commentators described Al Qaeda as an evil organization that wanted to destroy the U.S. way of life. On September 14, 2001, George Bush said, "Our responsibility to history is already clear. [We must] answer these attacks and rid the world of evil."

About the Targets

The World Trade Center was a pair of skyscrapers in New York City. They held the offices of several large multinational corporations and financial services companies.

The Pentagon, located in Arlington, VA, is the headquarters of the U.S. military.

The Capitol, in Washington, DC, is where the U.S. Congress meets.

The White House, in Washington, DC, is the home of the U.S. president.

Other commentators say that Al Qaeda carried out the 9/11 attacks because of their extreme religious beliefs. They say that these Muslim fundamentalists want their countries to be run by strict Muslim laws and do not want western influence on their society, culture, or political systems.

Some commentators say that the conflict between the United States and Al Qaeda is not as simple as "good" against "evil." Nor can it be understood as a religious conflict. They say that the 9/11 attacks were a military operation carried out against the U.S. because the U.S. has carried out many unfair military operations in the Middle East. Al Qaeda has said it does not want U.S. military bases in its holy land, Saudi Arabia (home of Mecca and Medina, Islam's two holiest cities). Al Qaeda wants the U.S. to stop aiding Israel's occupation of the Palestinian territories, and it wants the U.S. to stop supporting corrupt dictators in the Arab and Muslim world.

What Happened Next?

War in Afghanistan

George Bush, who was president in 2001, ordered a massive military strike against Afghanistan. He thought Osama bin Laden (the head of Al Qaeda) was hiding there. He also knew that Afghanistan was home to many members of Al Qaeda. To this day, 10 years later, the U.S. military is still in Afghanistan. More than 1600 U.S. troops have died in Afghanistan, over 11,000 troops have been wounded, and thousands of civilian Afghans have died.

USA PATRIOT Act

To help police fight terrorism at home, the U.S. Congress passed the USA PATRIOT Act in October 2001. (See pp. 44-45 for more on the PATRIOT Act.) This law restricted the freedoms of U.S. citizens and allowed the police to more easily detain people they suspected of being terrorists. The Transportation Security Administration (TSA) was established in November 2001 to increase the security of boat, train and, especially, airplane travel.

Terrorist Bombing in Indonesia

On October 12, 2002, a radical Muslim group exploded bombs in night clubs in Bali, Indonesia, killing 200 and injuring another 200. In November 2002, Osama bin Laden claimed the bombing was in direct retaliation for the U.S. war on terror.

U.S. Invades Iraq

In 2003, the U.S. Congress voted to invade Iraq — at first because they thought Iraq had weapons of mass destruction. However, the U.S. never found weapons of mass destruction. Later, the U.S. argued that our military should stay in Iraq because Al Qaeda was active there. Today, the U.S. still has thousands of troops in Iraq. More than 4700 U.S. soldiers have died in Iraq, over 32,000 soldiers have been wounded, and more than 100,000 Iraqi civilians have died.

U.S. Military Budget in Trillions

The cost of our military operation in Afghanistan from 2001 to the present has been approximately \$444 billion. The cost of our operation in Iraq from late 2002 to the present has been approximately \$806 billion. The total for both military operations is \$1.25 trillion. Another \$8 billion has been spent



by the Veterans Administration (VA) to provide health care for returning troops.

More Bombings—Madrid and London

On March 11, 2004, a terrorist organization inspired by Al Qaeda set off a bomb on a train in Madrid, Spain, killing 190 people and injuring 1800. Some researchers believe that these attacks were a response to Spain joining the war against Iraq.

On July 7, 2005, in London, England, Muslim terrorists set off bombs in the subway and on a bus during rush hour. They killed 50 people and injured 700. In a videotape, one of the bombers explained that he was targeting British civilians because their democratically elected government was responsible for crimes committed in Arab nations. The bomber said he was “protecting and avenging [his] Muslim brothers and sisters.”

U.S. Kills Bin Laden

In May 2011, after ten years of searching, the U.S. military finally discovered the hiding place of Osama bin Laden. He was living in a mansion in Pakistan. President Obama ordered the military strike that killed Osama bin Laden on May 1.

After the assassination of Osama bin Laden, Al Qaeda promised to retaliate.

Sources: <www.historycommons.org>; <www.boston.com> 9/15/05; <english.aljazeera.net> 05/2011; <www.boston.com> 5/9/11>; <www.icasualties.org>; <www.fas.org/sgp/crs/natsec/RL33110.pdf>; <www.cbc.ca/fifth/warwithoutborders/bombing.html>; <www.ict.org>; <www.csmonitor.com> 10/4/2001; <www.theage.com.au> 11/14/02.

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Discussion Questions

Was there anything in this article that surprised you?

Test your knowledge. Fill out “9/11 by the Numbers,” which can be found at <www.nelrc.org/changeagent/extras>.