

Day of terror

Hijacked planes crash, collapse World Trade Center, Pentagon also targeted; coordinated attacks stun nation



The Associated Press

People run from the collapse of the World Trade Center Tower this morning. Terrorists coordinated attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon.

By JERRY SCHWARTZ
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

NEW YORK — In a horrific sequence of destruction, terrorists hijacked two American Airlines airliners and crashed them into the World Trade Center in a coordinated series of attacks today that brought down the twin 110-story towers. A plane also slammed into the Pentagon, raising fears that the seat of government itself was under attack.

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"I have a sense it's a horrendous number of lives lost," New York City Mayor Rudolph Giuliani said. "Right now we have to focus on saving as many lives as possible."

Authorities had been trying to evacuate those who work in the twin towers, but many were thought to have been trapped. About 50,000 people work at the Trade Center. American Airlines said its two aircraft were carrying a total of 156 people.

"This is perhaps the most audacious terrorist attack that's ever taken place in the world," said Chris Yates, an aviation expert at Jane's Transport in London. "It takes a logistics operation from the terror group involved that is second to none. Only a very small handful of terror groups is on that list. ... I would name at the top of the list Osama bin Laden."

President Bush ordered a full-scale investigation to "hunt down the folks who committed this act." Within the hour, the Pentagon took a direct, devastating hit from an aircraft. The fiery crash collapsed one side of the five-sided structure.

The White House, the Pentagon and the Capitol were evacuated along with other federal buildings in Washington and New York.

Authorities in Washington immediately began deploying troops, including an infantry regiment. The Situation Room at the White House was in full operation. And authorities went on alert from coast to coast, halting all air traffic and tightening security at strategic installations.

"This is the second Pearl Harbor. I don't think that I overstate it," said Sen. Chuck Hagel, R-Neb.

American Airlines identified the planes that crashed into the Trade Center as Flight 11, a Los Angeles-bound jet hijacked after takeoff from Boston with 92 people aboard, and Flight 77, which was seized while carrying 64 people from Washington to Los Angeles.

FROM THE PUBLISHER



Aubrey Webb

Beaumont's children get right message

September 11, 2001, is a second date that will live in infamy. Today marks the second time that the United States of America was suddenly and deliberately attacked.

Cowardly acts of terrorism in U.S. cities have ended thousands if, God forbid, not tens of thousands, of American lives.

September 11, 2001, will be remembered as a date on which people in the West Bank's city of Nablus celebrated this morning's attacks, chanting "God is Great" and distributing candy to passers-by. Their actions serve as instruction for their children. It is a seminar on their joy of creating death and that life has little value.

High alert, evacuations, closures nationwide in wake of terrorism

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

NEW YORK — Authorities went on alert from coast to coast Tuesday, halting all air traffic, evacuating high-profile buildings and tightening security at strategic facilities following the attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon.

Many federal and state office buildings were closed, as well as prominent tourist attractions — Disney World in Florida, Seattle's Space Needle, the Gateway Arch in St. Louis and Knott's Berry Farm in southern California. Even the Museum of Tolerance in Los Angeles was shut down.

Evacuations were ordered at the United Nations building in New York, and the tallest skyscrapers in Chicago, Los Angeles, Boston, Cleveland and Minneapolis.

In Massachusetts and Maine, most state employees were sent home, and state buildings shut down.

Military bases across the country went on alert. Extra security was added at the Department of Energy's nuclear weapons and research center in Oak Ridge, Tenn. The



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An aircraft, at right, is seen as it is about to fly into the World Trade Center in New York. The aircraft was the second to fly into the tower.

The Kennedy Space Center in Florida was under an "enhanced security awareness."

In Louisiana, the state police

In California, Gov. Gray Davis convened a meeting of the State Emergency Council and requested heightened security in all state buildings.