

The Day Everything Changed

On September 11, 2001, the United States and the world forever changed when a series of airline hijackings and suicide attacks were committed by 19 militants associated with the Islamic extremist group al-Qaeda. These were the deadliest terrorist attacks on American soil in U.S. history. The attacks against New York City and Washington, D.C., caused extensive death and destruction and triggered an enormous U.S. effort to combat terrorism. About 2,750 people were killed in New York, 184 at the Pentagon, and 40 in Pennsylvania; all 19 terrorists died. Police and fire departments in New York also suffered: hundreds had rushed to the scene of the attacks, and more than 400 police officers and firefighters were killed.

On the morning of 9/11, groups of attackers boarded four domestic aircraft at three East Coast airports, and soon after takeoff they disabled the crews and took control of the aircrafts. At 8:46 a.m. the first plane, American Airlines flight 11, was piloted into the north tower of the World Trade Center in New York City. The second plane, United Airlines flight 175, struck the south tower 17 minutes later. At 9:59 a.m., the World Trade Center's south tower collapsed, and the north tower fell 29 minutes later. The third plane, American Airlines flight 77, struck the southwest side of the Pentagon at 9:37 am. Minutes later, the Federal Aviation Authority ordered a nationwide ground stop, and at 10:03 am, the fourth aircraft, United Airlines flight 93, crashed in the Pennsylvania countryside after its passengers attempted to overpower their assailants.

Negative stereotypes and attitudes toward Muslims intensified in many Western societies after the events of 9/11. In the USA, the FBI recorded a sixteen-fold increase in hate crimes (e.g., acts of arson, aggravated assault, property crimes) against Muslim Americans from 2001 to 2002, at which point the amount of hate crimes plateaued. Several other studies have documented an increase in prejudice, discrimination, and other forms of unfair treatment (e.g., verbal harassment) toward Muslim Americans since 9/11. As a result of the tragedies that occurred on 9/11 aspects of everyday life have changed for those in the U.S. and for people all over the world.

Over nineteen years after the 9/11 attacks, the Afghan Taliban is stronger than it has been since its overthrow in 2001. Its territory and its ranks are no longer limited to its traditional base in the Pashtun south and east. The Taliban even has international legitimacy, sending delegations to Indonesia, China, and Russia, as well as maintaining an official office in Doha. In other words, despite the United States spending north of one trillion dollars and losing more than 2,000 soldiers, the Taliban's control over Afghanistan is solidifying. In April, President Biden announced the withdrawal of all U.S. forces in Afghanistan by September 11, 2021. The Biden Administration inherited a deal made between the Trump Administration and the Taliban.

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Information gathered from: Peter L. Bergen's "September 11 Attacks." *Britannica Academic*, (Encyclopædia Britannica, Inc.,2021); Patricia M. Rodriguez Mosquera's "Coping with the 10th Anniversary of 9/11: Muslim Americans' Sadness, Fear, and Anger" in *Cognition & Emotion*, vol. 27 no.5, Dec.14, 2013; Tricia Bacon and Daniel Byman's "De-Talibanization and the Onset of Insurgency in Afghanistan" in *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism*, vol. 44, no. 11, Jan. 14, 2021.