On September 11, 2001, 19 Islamic extremists attacked the United States. They used knives to take over four planes. They flew two of the planes into the World Trade Center in New York City. A third plane hit the Pentagon. The Pentagon is the main office for the U.S. military. It is just outside Washington, D.C. The fourth plane crashed in a field in Pennsylvania. The attacks are often called 9/11. More than 3,000 people were killed, including police officers and firefighters.

**Carefully coordinated attacks**

Al-Qaida was the group behind the attacks. Its leader was Osama bin Laden. Al-Qaida and bin Laden were Islamic extremists. Islam is one of the world's main religions, like Judaism or Christianity. Islam's followers are called Muslims. Islamic extremists believe different things from most Muslims. The religion is normally peaceful. Islamic extremists can be violent.
Bin Laden was from the Middle East. He said he planned the attacks because he was angry at the United States. He thought the United States was too involved in the Middle East. For example, the United States sold weapons to Saudi Arabia. The United States also gave money to Israel. It is a Jewish country in the Middle East. Many Muslims also live there. The land has been fought over for centuries. Bin Laden believed that Jews should leave the land.

The extremists got on airplanes. All the planes were supposed to go to California. Soon after takeoff, the extremists took over the planes. They crashed two of the planes into the Twin Towers of the World Trade Center in New York City.

**Thousands of casualties**

At 9:37 a.m., the extremists crashed one of the planes into the Pentagon. Part of the giant concrete building fell down.

About 20 minutes later, a tower at the World Trade Center fell down. At 10:28 a.m., the other Trade Center tower fell. Close to 3,000 people died in the World Trade Center and the area. This number includes 343 firefighters and paramedics and 60 police officers. About 6,000 people were hurt.

The extremists took over a fourth plane soon after leaving the airport. The passengers and flight attendants decided to fight them.

The plane crashed in a farm field in Pennsylvania. Everyone on the plane was killed. Still, the plane could have crashed into a building. The people who fought back probably saved lives.

**Bush declares war**

George W. Bush was the president at the time. He had to fly around the country to stay safe. At 7 p.m., he returned to the White House. He spoke to the American people. Bush said that terror attacks can bring down a building. They cannot bring down America. They can crush steel, but they cannot crush the country.

On October 7, the U.S. went to war with al-Qaida. Soldiers were sent to Afghanistan. Bin Laden went into hiding. On May 2, 2011, he was finally tracked down. He was killed by U.S. soldiers.

In August 2017, President Donald Trump gave a speech. He said more U.S. soldiers would be going to Afghanistan.

*Editor’s Note: The original published version of this article on the history of September 11 contained insensitive and problematic language to describe a very sensitive topic. This mistake has since been addressed, and the article has been updated. We apologize for this oversight, and we’re particularly grateful for educators who help us improve by speaking up and holding us accountable.*