

Wednesday, September 12, 2001

Special Edition

37 pages on America's day of terror

USA TODAY

NO. 1 IN THE USA

Carnage in New York

Horror, disbelief and thousands of victims. 6A

Pentagon in flames

As many as 800 believed dead at military HQ. 7A

'Tears most of the day'

Coast to coast, Americans turn to each other. 8A

'Act of war' Terrorists strike; death toll 'horrendous'

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86% say attacks are acts of war

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Second impact: Flames and debris explode from a World Trade Center tower as a jetliner slams into the structure Tuesday. Both towers in Manhattan collapsed into a pile of rubble shortly thereafter. By Chao Sol Cheong, AP

Minute by minute, fear envelops the country As jetliners strike U.S. landmarks, America's sense of security is shattered

It may have been the bloodiest day in U.S. history, when our two biggest office towers were obliterated and the Pentagon, symbol of our military authority, was ripped open like an egg carton. Our commercial jetliners were turned into weapons of mass murder, and we had to stop doing things we always do, from trading stocks to going to Disney World.

People ran through the ash-covered streets of Lower Manhattan like extras in a nuclear winter fantasy, chased by a mighty cloud of dust and debris from the office towers they once occupied. Others, some on fire, jumped from 30, 40, 80 stories. One couple held hands as they leapt. Even if Sept. 11, 2001, was not our deadliest day, it was surely our worst. Americans talked of "a second Pearl Harbor" and "an act of war," but the comparisons faltered. This time it was civilians dying in the nation's political and financial centers, not soldiers and sailors in a distant Pacific territory. This time the targets were not outdated battleships, but buildings familiar to every schoolchild.

And if this really was war — 86% of Americans in a USA TODAY/CNN/Gallup Poll on Tuesday said it was — who was the enemy? What did he want? When was the next battle? Suspicion focused on an individual, indicted Saudi terrorist Osama bin Laden, not a nation. As some called for a congressional declaration of war, Rep. Jim Moran, D-Va., asked, "Who do you declare war on?" History will find that something about America changed at 9 a.m. Tuesday, predicted John Morton Blum, a retired Yale historian and World War II scholar. "Americans aren't used to being in a war zone," he said. "From here on,

they are. No superpower has ever been hit like this." Sen. John McCain, R-Ariz., struck an apocalyptic note: "I don't think our lifestyles will be the same for a long time." The prime casualty was America's sense of safety. When Arab terrorists bombed the World Trade Center 8 years ago, six people died, and the complex came back better than ever. But by noon Tuesday, the Trade Center looked like a smoldering dump and America looked like a nation in retreat — office workers ran up Broadway, and men and women in uniform walked from the Pentagon past Arlington National Cemetery and the Iwo Jima memorial. They glanced fearfully behind them, as though afraid of what would

"Pearl Harbor brought us together to face a problem. Maybe this can do the same." —Former secretary of State Lawrence Eagleburger

Cover story

By Rick Hampson USA TODAY

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